Internal Market Orientation and Customer Orientation: Effects on Service Employees and Customer Experience

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https://doi.org/10.34737/wyy6y

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

WESTMINSTER BUSINESS SCHOOL

Thesis submitted to the University of Westminster for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Internal Market Orientation and Customer Orientation: Effects on Service Employees and Customer Experience

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October 2024

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between internal market orientation (IMO), customer orientation of service employees (COSE), and customer experience (CX) in the context of hospitality industry. Drawing on social exchange theory and equity theory, this research examines how employee-oriented practices, such as support, communication, and work-family balance affect employee behaviour and subsequently the experience of the customer. Combining organisational and customer perspectives, a conceptual framework linking IMO, CX, and COSE was developed, addressing gaps in existing research.

This thesis, guided by the pragmatic approach, employs fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to empirically examine the links between IMO and COSE, as well as COSE and CX in the context of independent cafes. The findings show that no single dimension of IMO is sufficient for achieving customer-oriented behaviours in service employees, highlighting that an integrative approach is needed to enhance COSE. The results show that achieving the desired customer-oriented behaviours is impossible without establishing a high level of internal communication. Using fsQCA, this research provides two pathways of how COSE can be achieved through IMO dimensions. The same quantitative method was applied to examine the causal links between COSE and CX. The results show the need for holistic approach when aiming to enhance CX, as no single COSE factor alone was enough for providing great experience. Social skills were found to be the crucial element for enabling high levels of CX in the context of this study. The fsQCA results offer two distinct pathways of achieving high levels of CX through COSE. The use of fsQCA, a relatively novel methodological approach is this field, offers nuanced and actionable insights into the causal combinations between internal practices, employee behaviours and experience of the customer.

By combining internal organisational practices and customer perspectives, this thesis deepens the understanding of the consequences of employee-oriented management approach, providing valuable theoretical and practical implications.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my Director of Studies, Prof Jose L. Ruiz-Alba Robledo. His ongoing support and ability to motivate me with kind words made all the difference throughout this tough and long journey. He was always available whenever I needed guidance, providing constructive and timely feedback that kept me moving forward, especially during the hardest moments when I felt stuck. I've learned not only how to be a better researcher but also gained invaluable insights into the academic process thanks to him. His mentorship has been absolutely fundamental in shaping my work and growth as a researcher.

I also want to extend my appreciation to my supervisory team. I was fortunate enough to have two second supervisors during this process, Dr Anastasia Alexeeva and Dr Anees Ikramullah. Though they could not be with me for the entirety of my PhD, their insightful feedback left a lasting impact on my research, and I am grateful for their input.

To my parents, Jane and Alex, I cannot begin to express how much your love and support have meant to me. From celebrating my academic milestones since I was very young to giving me the strength and guidance to push through any challenge life could throw at me, you have been my rock, even from thousands of miles away. Despite not being able to see each other during my PhD process, you were always there for me. Your encouragement and advice have carried me through every phase of my life, which was especially crucial during the often-lonely PhD process. I truly would not be the person I am today without your loving upbringing.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work. All sources are acknowledged in the references in the end of this thesis. The length of this thesis, including tables, appendices, and references, is approximately 67,000 words.

Elizaveta Simakova

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This Chapter provides a discussion of the research background that frames this thesis. It begins by outlining the industry landscape, offering the context of this research. The Chapter then addresses the research aims, identifying the key gaps in the existing literature that this research plans to address. Additionally, it outlines the research objectives and questions that guide this investigation, as well as a summary of methodology that will be used to address them. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure, with the organisation of subsequent chapters is presented.

1.1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The late 20th century saw a significant transformation in all industries, resulting in the phenomenon often referred to as ‘servitisation’ (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988). Servitisation began when businesses started to face increasing levels of competition, pushing them to find new ways to add value to their offering (Kowalkowski et al., 2017). In efforts to differentiate themselves from the competition, organisations started to bundle their goods with services, ongoing support and educating materials, thus providing more comprehensive solutions to their customer (Vandermerwe and Rada, 1988). Eventually, this emerging trend spread across almost every sector, and the service economy began to take over. For instance, Amazon, an online marketplace, integrates physical goods with services through its Amazon Prime Membership, offering benefits such as free delivery and streaming services. Similarly, Nike, a well-known sportswear brand, enhances customer experience with a NikePlus membership where their customers can get access to workout plans and personalised coaching.

The market shifted from focusing primarily on tangible physical products to the idea of creating services around the tangible goods. With the shift from traditional goods-dominant market to service-dominant market, the traditional marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) is no longer enough for organisational success (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Access to production technology means that quality products are no longer a rarity and therefore cannot guarantee business success. While firms must continue to innovate to keep up, they now face a much more dynamic environment to which they need to adapt (Keiningham et al., 2020).

Due to the changing market environment in the past couple of decades, the task of satisfying the customer has become increasingly difficult to achieve. Customers have increasingly prioritised intangible attributes when evaluating products and services, and their satisfaction is dependant not merely on providing a good product or service but creating positive customer experiences throughout the whole customer journey (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl, 2017). Marketing Science Institute (2016) have also highlighted Customer Experience (CX) as one of the research priorities in the coming years, due to its increasing complexity and significant effect on financial performance.

Companies race to adopt the best ways to achieve better customer experience to beat their competition and establish themselves in the market. To provide the best CX in this changing and complex environment, companies need to start looking inward and take active effort in understanding the needs of their employees to be able to provide them with the right environment. Meyer and Schwager (2007) believe that to achieve favourable levels of CX, every function within the company has a role to play. They also highlight the importance of collaboration and information flow within the company. Marketing teams need to understand the needs and the expectations of the target customer segment, while product managers need to design experiences around these customer needs. Analyst teams must collect and analyse the data coming from every touchpoint, and finally, HR should create training programmes and include CX outcomes in employee performance evaluations (Meyer and Schwager, 2007). Therefore, delivering great experience for the customer is influenced by the organisation's internal structure and processes. Due to this, managing the experience has become a trending topic in both academia and business (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). Nevertheless, customer experience management remains a relatively nascent field, requiring more research to understand how various internal and external influence it (Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl, 2017). This thesis aims to investigate how organisations can leverage internal management approaches to enhance employee behaviours, subsequently improving the experience of the customer.

Building on the discussion about the role of internal practices in delivering great experiences, it is relevant to explore internal market orientation (IMO) – a concept that highlights the importance of collecting employee information, sharing it, and acting on it appropriately. This concept is concerned with how organisations can effectively leverage employee insights to improve employee outcomes and align business goals and strategies. Adoption of IMO implies treating employees as internal customers of an organisation (Lings and Greenley, 2005). This approach focuses on identifying the needs of employees through collecting employee information, communicating it, and satisfying employee needs by effectively responding to this internal information (Lings and Greenley, 2005). IMO therefore comprises of three dimensions: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and response to intelligence (Gounaris, 2006). Each of these dimensions has been also broken down into subdimensions, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The 'response to intelligence' dimension is particularly important as it brings the collected information to action. One of its subdimensions is management concern, which reflects the level of compassion the managers have towards their employees. Carefully listening to employee feedback can yield positive results to both employees and the firm. Gathering and analysing valuable insights about a company's internal market can help managers create fair remuneration systems that truly reflect performance, design jobs that are more likely to be fulfilling, and adapt training to effectively close knowledge gaps. It is therefore proposed that IMO adoption can successfully address the needs and wants of employees by tailoring training programmes, rewards, job design, work-family balance, and other job aspects according to the information about the firm's internal market (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006; Ruizalba et al., 2014).

The concept of IMO has been on the rise in the past decade. Adoption of IMO is highly relevant for the firms because not only can it improve the workplace for employees, but also organisational performance – the key goal for the firm (Fang, Chang, Ou and Chou, 2014; Yu et al., 2019; Lings and Greenley, 2009). It is assumed that employees' needs must be fulfilled first to be able to address the needs of external customers, and Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006) proposed that satisfied customers result in higher profitability for the firm. Hallowell (1996) has provided evidence for the positive relationship between customer satisfaction (CSAT) and revenues. It has also been shown that higher levels of CSAT are antecedent to loyalty and repurchase behaviour, which leads to improved financial performance (Oliver, 1980; Homburg and Giering, 2001). The adoption of IMO activities is therefore highly important for organisations due to the implied benefits on overall performance.

Empirical and conceptual research has identified several consequences of IMO. Some of the IMO outcomes identified in the literature review, such as higher job satisfaction, empowerment, motivation to perform, better understanding of firm strategies and customer orientation can all result in provision of better service for the customer (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006;

Modi and Sahi, 2018). This thesis examines the consequences of IMO with a specific focus on its effect on customer outcomes and customer-oriented behaviours of employees.

Some authors suggest that there exists a direct relationship between IMO and customer satisfaction (CSAT) (Lings and Greenley, 2009; Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez, 2009). IMO has also been found to affect CSAT indirectly, through a positive change in employee behaviour that is favoured by the customers (Lings and Greenley, 2010; Fang, Chang, Ou and Chou, 2014). While these relationships are generally assumed and discussed, literature analysis showed a lack of empirical evidence for the relationship between IMO and CSAT and some research only suggests a weak link between these two concepts (Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez, 2009; Martin and To, 2013).

IMO highlights the value of service employees, as they gather large amounts of customer data just through everyday contact with the customers. Improved employee motivation and skills, as well as integration within teams, can facilitate the flow of this important information between employees and departments (Gounaris, Chryssochoidis, Boukis, 2020). Sharing and acting on such information may help in the design process of touchpoints – points of interaction between the firm and the customer. Therefore, considering the positive influence of IMO on the outcomes mentioned, it would be logical to assume that successful implementation of IMO activities such as gathering and disseminating employee information, as well as employee training and management support would eventually result in better experience for the customers. Surprisingly, however, substantial research on the effect of IMO on CX was not found during literature review, indicating a gap in research. Therefore, the relationship between IMO and CX will be examined in this thesis.

Another relevant outcome of IMO mentioned above, is customer orientation of employees. IMO elements such as job design, training programmes and management support should result in higher clarity of behavioural expectations (Lings, 2004). This means that service employees would be clearly communicated the goal of customer interactions and educated in the ways it can be achieved. In industries where employee-customer contact is frequent, the behaviour and attitude of employees as well as their interactions with the customer will inevitably form parts of CX (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). Therefore, customer orientation of employees in service industries is highly relevant in understanding the creation of CX. There has been little explicit empirical evidence for the relationship between IMO and customer orientation, despite the relationship being often implied in the literature (Lings and Greenley, 2010; Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou 2010). This signifies a research gap, as the relationship lacks empirical foundations. This research will attempt to bridge that gap by understanding how IMO affects customer orientation and, subsequently, CX. To explore the concept of customer orientation, the focus will be placed on a more specific concept – customer orientation of service employees (COSE).

COSE has been defined by Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) as a behaviour adopted by service employees when catering for customer needs and wishes. The authors identify three elements of COSE: employee motivation, skills, both social and technical, and decision-making authority. They believe that each of these dimensions contribute to employee's willingness and ability to understand a customer and go out of their way to deliver a great experience. It is assumed that such customer-oriented behaviour determines the perception of high-quality service and, therefore, can positively influence CX (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003; Lings and Greenley, 2009). Thus, for reasons mentioned above, it can be anticipated that IMO contributes to higher levels of COSE, subsequently leading to improved CX.

CX is the final concept discussed in this thesis. Verhoef et al. (2009) propose a holistic approach and conceptualise CX as a multidimensional construct that involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the firm. Experience spans across all stages of customer journey, starting before they decide to make a purchase, during the process, and lasts after purchase has been completed (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). In other words, CX is an impression that customers form during all interaction with the brand and its products or services. Managing customer experience is now one of the main priorities for organisations, however, it is also a complex challenge due to evolving customer expectations (Klaus and Maklan, 2013). This research will aim to understand what is needed to deliver positive CX, and what role organisational practices and its employees play in achieving it. Simply hiring service-minded individuals is not enough for delivering memorable CX (Wilder, Collier and Barnes, 2014). To maintain it, companies must continuously understand changing customer needs, train their employees accordingly, and create an environment where employees are able to perform in a customer-oriented ways and deliver great experience (Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). Moreover, firms need to consider every touchpoint (point of interaction) that customers have with the brand at every single stage of their journey (De Keyser et al., 2020). Some of the examples of touchpoints are company website or app, point of sale, packaging, frontline employees, customer support system. Therefore, the ability to successfully design CX starts within the organisation and its employees.

Practitioners have also acknowledged the importance of delivering positive CX. In fact, a recent study conducted by Gartner (2019) has found that 67% of businesses compete mostly or entirely on customer experience, and by 2022 a notable 89% of companies are predicted to compete based on customer experience alone. Companies with a customer experience mindset are said to grow revenues 4-8% above their industry benchmark (Bain, 2015). People are willing to pay a premium to get the experience they want, with 73% of customers admitting experience to be an important part of their purchasing decisions (PwC, 2018).

The importance of understanding the relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX lies in subsequent behaviours of satisfied customers (Oliver, 1980; Homburg and Giering, 2001). Customer behaviours, such as repurchase, revisits and sharing their comments and experiences can preserve and expand existing customer base (Kim, Han and Lee, 2001; Xu and Li, 2016). One of the most important outcomes for the hospitality industry is the phenomenon of sharing comments and recommendations online, which is called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). eWOM has important implications for the service industry, leading to customer loyalty and repurchases (See-To and Ho, 2014; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015; Matute, Polo-Redondo and Utrillas, 2016). In the hotel industry for example, around 80% of travellers read at least a few online reviews before making their decision to book a room (González-Porras et al., 2019). eWOM can therefore have a serious impact on the success of organisations. Customer engagement in eWOM is affected by their experience, highlighting the need to understand the concept of CX and how it can be managed (Siqueira et al., 2019).

Customers can observe employee behaviours and attitudes particularly well in businesses where the level of contact between employees and customers is high. This research will therefore be focused on the hospitality industry, where such contact is frequent and therefore has important implications for the business (Hartline et al., 2000; Shum, Gatling, and Shoemaker, 2018). Hospitality services are characterised by intangibility and perishability (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Therefore, customers often make their decisions based on the comments provided by other customers and evaluate their purchase decisions by the quality of experience (Dean, 2007; Wang et al., 2014). Employee behaviour and the resulting CX are therefore a matter of paramount importance in the hospitality industry because customers often share their experiences online, which can either attract or detract customers from the business (Xu and Li, 2016). Therefore, it will be interesting to explore the concepts of IMO, CX and COSE in the context of hospitality industry, where they are particularly relevant.

1.2. THE INDUSTRY LANDSCAPE

This thesis will focus on the coffee shop industry within the broader hospitality sector. Discussing the evolving landscape of this industry is important to the context of this thesis, as this sector has seen shifts in customer expectations and demands. The focus on high-quality experiences, as mentioned previously, had grown, making CX central to business success. In this context, internal factors like IMO and COSE are highly relevant. As businesses evolve to meet new challenges and requirements, it becomes increasingly important to understand how internal practices can be effectively leveraged to ensure long-term success. This section considers the transformations currently taking place in the industry, as well as the critical role of service employees in adapting to these changes. This discussion seeks to establish the context for the investigation in this thesis.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has brought a lot of changes to people's lifestyles and routines. It gave rise to remote and hybrid working culture, since lockdowns and infection rates have forced many employees to find alternative places to work. In the post-pandemic world, many still choose to work outside of the office or have switched to jobs that do not require to be physically present (McKinsey & Company, 2021). However, for a lot of people working from home is not feasible due to noise or lack of space, while hiring a co-working space may be too costly. Now it is not uncommon to see laptops in every quiet corner of a restaurant, hotel lobby, public library, and, of course, a coffee shop.

Coffee shops have evolved into more than just places to grab a coffee and a bite. Around 25% of remote workers in UK choose coffee shops as a place to work, while those who work from home often find cafes to be an escape and an opportunity to be around people, feel like part of the community (HR Review, 2023). After a long time spent at home in the lockdowns, many have also grown accustomed to making coffee at home, which resulted in a lot of coffee shops selling their own beans and equipment in store and educating customers about it (World Coffee Portal, 2023). This has led to a shift in coffee shop culture that brands and employees are adapting to.

For example, Blank Street Coffee, a new chain that opened various locations across London, identifies more as a tech start-up than a coffee shop. The company prioritises hiring baristas for their customer service skills over their coffee-making abilities, as high-tech machines ensure consistent drink quality with a push of a button, allowing employees to focus on delivering great experiences instead (The New York Times, 2023). This is a good example of a company placing high value on customer orientation of their employees over the traditional coffee-making skills.

Moreover, in the current economic climate, rising costs have posed challenges to the hospitality industry. With portions often becoming smaller due to ingredient sourcing costs, delivering exceptional experience through COSE is becoming a strategy that businesses can adopt to offset the potential loss of customers and retain customer loyalty (The New York Times, 2024).

Therefore, the experience of visiting coffee shops is shifting. This phenomenon makes the relationship between organisational factors such as IMO and COSE, and CX even more important. Service employees create an experience through setting a favourable environment for individuals who just came for a coffee and catch up with friends, as well as those who came to work. Some of the ways service employees can contribute to enhancing experience is creating a positive environment, delivering personalised service, and ensuring smooth service recovery. The following discussion addresses these topics, touching on the relevance of IMO and COSE within them. This will be further elaborated on in the literature review and throughout the thesis. However, for the purposes of this Introduction Chapter, it serves to outline the key themes and elements and establish the context for the upcoming sections.

1.2.1 CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

The ambience of a store plays an important role in shaping CX. While some of the ambience factors are largely controlled by the brand, such as space layout and decoration, many of the ambience factors are highly dependent on the employees. For example, helpful and friendly attitudes of employees create a pleasant environment for customers to spend time in the establishment, whether to catch up with a friend or to do some reading or work. The attitude and behaviours of service employees, such as manners, empathy, and eye contact, have been found to positively affect dining experience (Alhelalat, Ma'moun and Twaissi, 2017). According to the authors, maintaining a clean and comfortable space, as well as appropriate music levels is largely in employees' control and it can significantly affect the experience. Customers' perception of emotional competence of employees, such as their empathy levels, has also been found to affect the experience (Delcourt et al., 2013). Therefore, investigating internal management practices such as IMO and COSE, which foster an environment that enables employees to deliver positive interactions, is crucial for understanding and enhancing CX.

1.2.2 PERSONALISED SERVICE

One of the ways to stand out and keep a loyal customer base for a business is personalised service. Personalisation can enhance a customer's sense of recognition and rapport, turning mundane transactions into meaningful interactions. Coffee shop employees who take time to understand and recognise customers' preferences, such as remembering the orders of regular visitors, can create a feeling of belonging that goes beyond a general transaction. Providing such personalised experiences requires employees to have strong social skills, motivation, and the autonomy to make decisions (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Värlander and Julien, 2010; Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). This is where internal management practices such as IMO become important, as they focus on educating and empowering employees, enabling them to deliver better service.

Apart from personalised service, catering to customers' needs is equally important, especially in environments where efficiency and attention to detail are essential. Many coffee shops serve people with busy schedules who expect quick and accurate service. Wrong orders or delays can lead to customer frustration and disrupt the atmosphere. Coffee shop staff who ensure that orders are correct and served promptly can help maximise the experience. This also applies to customers who use coffee shops are as workspaces, as timely and accurate orders will help them minimise distractions and maintain the workflow. Additionally, responding and adapting to customers' needs, such as accommodating special requests, helping customers connect to WiFi, providing water refills, can call enhance CX (Ferguson, Paulin and Bergeron, 2009). Through both personalised service and a strong focus on customer orientation, empowered employees play a central role in delivering a positive CX, highlighting the relevance of IMO and COSE.

1.2.3 EMPLOYEES AND SERVICE RECOVERY

Service recovery is a critical component of CX, especially when something goes wrong during the service delivery. A well-handled service failure can transform a negative situation into a positive outcome (Klaus and Maklan, 2012). Service recovery is not just about fixing the problems that arise, it's an opportunity for an employee to showcase their customer-orientated behaviours. According to the paradox of service recovery, when a customer's issue is resolved effectively, their overall satisfaction can be higher than in a situation where no problem has occurred at all (Tax et al., 1998). The positive emotions that result from successful problem resolution can enhance feelings of fairness and justice, strengthening customer loyalty, trust, commitment and retention (Tax et al., 1998; DeWitt, Nguyen and Marshall, 2008). Additionally, customers who have experienced a successful service recovery are likely to share their positive experience with others, further enhancing the business's reputation (Gustafsson, 2009).

Therefore, any issues that may arise during service, if handled correctly, can result in a great number of highly positive customer outcomes. Employee's social skills are vital in turning an unpleasant experience a positive one (Klaus and Maklan, 2012). Social skills are one of the crucial components of COSE, highlighting their importance in fostering customer-oriented behaviours in service employees (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Moreover, handling unpredicted situations swiftly also requires employees to have autonomy to make quick decisions – another key dimension of COSE (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Similarly, IMO significantly contributes to effective service recovery by informing employees about their responsibilities in such situations and equipping them with the right tools to resolve customer issues. This is achieved through training, internal communication, and employee engagement (Lings and Greenley, 2010). By using these practices, IMO can better prepare employees to address service failures swiftly and professionally. Therefore, IMO and COSE are important factors in handling service recovery, which has implications on CX.

1.3. THE AIM, RESEARCH GAPS, QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 AIM OF RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to understand the relationships between internal market orientation (IMO), customer orientation of service employees (COSE), and customer experience (CX). This research suggests that IMO has a direct influence on CX, as well as an indirect effect through the mediating role of COSE. In a broader sense, this research will aim to identify the elements that comprise each of the three concepts and the relationships between them. In the end of the Chapter 3, research propositions will be made, laying the foundation for developing the conceptual framework.

1.3.2 RESEARCH GAPS

Literature review of the aforementioned concepts was conducted, primarily focusing on Association of Business Schools (ABS) rated journals and several research gaps were found. One of the key gaps pertains to the relationship between IMO and CX, as literature analysis showed that despite high practical relevance, there is scant research on the impact of IMO on CX. Qui, Boukis and Storey (2021) found that there is a lack of robust empirical studies that demonstrate how IMO adds value for the customer. These authors believe there is a gap regarding understanding of the benefits that IMO adoption brings to the firm. Based on the literature about the consequences of IMO, it is suggested that CX can be positively influenced by IMO through fostering a working environment that teaches and encourages employees to enhance experience. This could be achieved by creating a more engaged and knowledgeable workforce that actively participates in decision-making process regarding touchpoint design and CX delivery (Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021).

Another contribution of this thesis would lie in enhancing the knowledge of CX and its management. CX is a growing and highly relevant topic in both academia and business, it continues to be and will remain crucial in the marketing literature due to its significant impact on firm's performance (Gounaris and Almoraish, 2024). The model proposed in the end of Chapter 3 could be a useful conceptualisation for both academics and practitioners. It is generally accepted that CX and customer experience management (CXM) and the research on these topics is quite broad. However, there is still debate surrounding dimensionality of the concepts, integration of organisational and customer perspective, antecedents and outcomes, contextual lenses, and theoretical backgrounds (Kranzbühler et al., 2017; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). This research will aim to add to the understanding of this concept and reduce the fragmentation that exists in the area. Kranzbühler et al. (2017) in their critical review of the concept have called for more research that highlights holistic nature of CX and explores it from the perspective of organisational structure and channels. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) noted that understanding the key drivers of CX is of utmost importance. The authors have also mentioned the need to study the organisational capabilities and functions needed for successful CX, and how companies need to adapt to the complexity of customer journey. Studying the CX concept together with IMO and COSE could shed light on these questions and add to the debate. Furthermore, more than 55% of existing CX research adopts qualitative methodology, while this thesis incorporates a novel quantitative approach to deepen the understanding between COSE and CX (De Keyser et al., 2020). This research aims to address this gap by exploring how organisational factors such as IMO adoption and COSE can influence CX.

Managing CX is particularly challenging because measuring CX alone does not guarantee success. Many aspects of customer experiences aren't a direct consequence of brand's messages or offerings (Meyer and Schwager, 2007). Hodgkinson, Jackson and West (2021) also point out that current customer performance indicators are often fall short in providing the insight needed to build an actionable customer-driven strategy. As highlighted in the literature review, while significant efforts have been made to conceptualise and understand CX, much of the research remains theoretical due to the complexity of this concept. The CX field is dominated by conceptual papers due to the high level of complexity of this concept. Though process has been made, practical guidance on how to improve CX is still somewhat limited. By adopting the pragmatic paradigm and leveraging the fsQCA methodology that offers actionable pathways to achieve a desired outcome, this research aims to contribute practical insights into the combinations of factors that can lead to positive CX.

Literature review has shown that the concept of COSE, as proposed by Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003), has not been studied together in conjunction with either IMO or CX. This represents a significant research gap that requires further investigation. Based on the discussed outcomes of IMO and the antecedents of CX, this thesis will discuss a potential mediating effect of COSE on the relationship between these two concepts. Although no studies exploring the relationship between IMO and the conceptualisation of COSE defined by Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) were found, there are several reasons to assume the positive relationship between these concepts. There is evidence that certain aspects of IMO can positively influence a related construct, customer orientation, by increasing employee satisfaction, job design and management support (Gounaris 2006; Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou 2010; Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021). IMO adoption can result in improvement of each of the COSE elements – motivation, skills, and decision-making authority. For example, IMO practices have been proved to increase employee motivation, while appropriate training should improve the skills of service employees (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Moreover, participative management, one of the components of IMO, leads to higher employee empowerment, which is necessary for being creative and making the right call when working with customers – a quality needed for employee's decision-making authority (Gounaris, 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). By examining COSE, this research aims to enhance the understanding of this concept and address the gap regarding its relationship with IMO and CX.

Qui, Boukis and Storey (2021) believe future research needs to incorporate internal perspective with the customer perspective, aiming to align both internal and external responses. To address this gap, this research aims to incorporate these perspectives by constructing a conceptual framework that links IMO, COSE, and CX. Given the logical connection between IMO and CX, as well as COSE and CX, this thesis aims to explore the direct effect of COSE on CX as well as its mediating effect on IMO and CX relationship. In the first part of the thesis, literature review is conducted in the field of these concepts. Based on that, a conceptual framework is developed in Chapter 3, providing a structured way to understand the relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX.

Final contributions of this research would be methodological and theoretical. The use of novel fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) presents a methodological contribution to the fields of IMO and COSE, where this method has not been previously used. This approach allows for a more nuanced examination of complex causal relationships by identifying multiple configurations that lead to the same desired outcome. This approach is particularly useful in the study of IMO, COSE, and CX because it accommodates the complexity that these concepts bring. Unlike traditional quantitative methods, fsQCA helps to identify different combinations of factors that lead to an improved outcome. This flexible approach is therefore valuable for understanding patterns in the context of small businesses that typically have limited resources but aim to achieve good outcomes. By applying fsQCA, this research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how internal practices, employee behaviours, and external customer experience interact, offering actionable insights.

The thesis aims to address these potential gaps. More discussion about these underexplored research areas will be presented below in the relevant sections of the following Chapters.

1.3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature review and in line with the aim of this Chapter, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What is the impact of IMO on CX?

RQ2: What is the influence of IMO on COSE?

RQ3: How does COSE influence CX?

RQ4: What is the mediating effect of COSE in the relationship between IMO and CX?

RQ5: Are there any necessary and sufficient IMO conditions or specific pathways that can enhance COSE?

RQ6: Are there any necessary and sufficient COSE conditions or specific pathways that can enhance CX?

1.3.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To address the research questions, the following objectives are proposed:

O1: Conduct literature analysis of the IMO concept (including antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks).

O2: Review and critically appraise the articles about COSE, identify its antecedents and consequences.

O3: Explore the CX concept, its antecedents and outcomes and theoretical backgrounds.

O4: Explore the relationships that exist between IMO, COSE and CX based on the literature and identified outcomes and antecedents of these concepts.

O5: Develop a conceptual framework based on the findings.

O6: Analyse the causal links between IMO and COSE using fsQCA in Study 1

O7: Analyse the causal links between COSE and CX using fsQCA in Study 2

The research questions and objectives are comprehensibly summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Research questions and corresponding objectives

Research Questions	**Research Objectives**
RQ1: What is the impact of IMO on CX?	O1: Conduct literature analysis of the IMO concept (including antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks) O3: Explore the CX concept, its antecedents and outcomes and theoretical backgrounds
RQ2: What is the influence of IMO on COSE?	O1: Conduct literature analysis of the IMO concept (including antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks)

	O2: Review and critically appraise the articles about COSE, identify its antecedents and consequences
RQ3: How does COSE influence CX?	O2: Review and critically appraise the articles about COSE, identify its antecedents and consequences O3: Explore the CX concept, its antecedents and outcomes and theoretical backgrounds
RQ4: What is the mediating effect of COSE in the relationship between IMO and CX?	O4: Explore the relationships that exist between IMO, COSE and CX based on the literature and identified outcomes and antecedents of these concepts
RQ5: Are there any necessary and sufficient IMO conditions or specific pathways that can enhance COSE?	O6: Analyse the causal links between IMO and COSE using fsQCA in Study 1
RQ6: Are there any necessary and sufficient COSE conditions or specific pathways that can enhance CX?	O7: Analyse the causal links between COSE and CX using fsQCA in Study 2

1.4. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to investigate the relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX. To address the research propositions outlined above, a thorough literature review will be conducted, resulting in the development of a conceptual framework that links these concepts. Research propositions RP1-RP4, which focus on examining the linear relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX, are put forward to establish the foundation for the conceptual framework.

However, within the scope of this thesis, the objective was to deepen the understanding of these connections by looking at the causal links between these concepts. The empirical evaluation will later assess the causal links between IMO and COSE, as well as COSE and CX, using a novel methodological approach for these fields. Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) has been selected for this research, which will be explained in detail in Chapter 4. This section of the thesis aims to further understand the links between these concepts and will put forward additional propositions – Research proposition A (RPA) and Research Proposition B (RPB).

FsQCA is particularly useful for understanding how various combinations of variables (or dimensions) contribute to an outcome (Ragin, 2008a). This method allows for the identification of necessary and sufficient conditions that lead to the desired result, making it suitable for investigating complex multidimensional constructs like IMO, COSE, and CX.

Study 1 will examine the pathways through which combinations of IMO dimensions impact COSE, focusing on the employee perspective. Study 2 will explore how COSE influences CX through combinations of its elements, emphasising customer perspective. Data for both studies will be gathered through survey tools adapted from existing validated scales and applied within the context of independent cafes in London. This analysis will identify configurations of variables that lead to COSE and CX, providing actionable insights for businesses on how to optimise their internal practices to benefit the customer.

The resulting findings offer practical insights by demonstrating how various factors interact and how they can be strategically combined to achieve the desired outcomes like COSE an CX. This approach aligns with the pragmatic paradigm underlying this research, which emphasises actionable solutions and real-world applications.

1.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical considerations outlined by the University of Westminster have been carefully followed from the start of the research design process. The empirical studies were structured to ensure no personal or sensitive topics were addressed, and no mental or physical harm occurred during participation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the anonymity was ensured for all participants by avoiding collection of identifying information. An Ethics Application Form was submitted through the university's Virtual Research Environment site (VRE) along with the necessary documents. These documents included the Consent Form, Participant Information Sheet and the list of indicative questions with the survey items intended for the use in the studies. This research falls under Class 1, which indicates that no harm or discomfort is associated with the study. The application was approved prior to the creation and dissemination of the survey instruments. Further details on the ethical considerations will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6, which focus on the empirical studies of the research.

1.6. THESIS STRUCTURE OUTLINE

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. In Chapter 1, the context of this research was introduced, as well as its aims, research questions, and objectives.

Following the introduction, Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive literature review, covering the concepts of IMO, COSE, and CX. Each concept is explored in detail to understand their dimensionality and theoretical foundations.

Building on the literature review, Chapter 3 outlines the research propositions and conceptual framework. This chapter explores the connections between IMO, COSE, and CX, drawing from existing literature to formulate research propositions. Based on these research propositions, a conceptual framework is developed. Finally, theoretical background of this research is discussed, as well as the use of theory in the marketing field.

Chapter 4 is focused on methodology. The pragmatic paradigm that guided this research and its implications are discussed. Then, the research design is outlined, providing a thorough explanation of the fsQCA methodology. Various measurement approaches to IMO, COSE and CX are explored and measurement scales for each concept are chosen and explained.

In Chapter 5, Study 1 is presented, which investigates the causal links between IMO and COSE. This Chapter describes a step-by-step process of the study, including the following: overview, sampling, demographics, measurement, analysis and findings. The ethical considerations are also addressed, and the data handling process is explained.

Chapter 6 focuses on Study 2, where the causal links between COSE and CX are examined. Similar to the previous study, this Chapter provides a detailed breakdown of the research process and presents the findings. Ethical considerations are also addressed.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this thesis by addressing the research objectives and questions outlined in Chapter 1, summarising the theoretical and practical contributions, acknowledging limitations and offering suggestions for the future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this Chapter, a comprehensive literature review is conducted on the concepts of internal market orientation (IMO), customer orientation of service employees (COSE), and customer experience (CX). These concepts are examined in detail, including their dimensionality, antecedents, and outcomes. The theoretical foundations of these concepts are also explored, providing an understanding of their development in the field. This Chapter lays the foundation for analysing how these concepts interact together, which is discussed in the subsequent sections of this thesis.

2.1. INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION

2.1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of internal market orientation (IMO) stems from a broader concept of internal marketing (IM). The term 'internal marketing' was coined by Berry (1981) to describe management practices that define employees as internal customers and jobs as internal products. This analogy shows that the strategies usually adopted for external marketing can be applied internally to achieve organisational goals. IM can result in higher job satisfaction, commitment, and efficiency, and can lead to an improved customer service through increased satisfaction and commitment of contact personnel (Sasser and Arbeit, 1976; Tansuhaj, Wong and McCullough, 1987; Berry, 1981).

Despite the acceptance of the IM concept in the marketing literature, its exact nature and the process of adopting internal marketing behaviours remained unclear (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003; Lings, 2004; Gounaris, 2006). Lings (2004) has introduced a new concept, IMO, with the aim of understanding what tools and processes are needed for adoption of IM. To conceptualise IMO, theoretical parallels had to be drawn. As noted previously, it is accepted that satisfaction of employee needs is a prerequisite for excellent customer service and external CSAT (Berry, 1981). Therefore, there should exist a link between internal marketing and external marketing orientation.

The notion of external market orientation (MO) has emerged as an operationalisation of the marketing concept (Lings, 1999). Market orientation is a set of management behaviours required for successfully implementing external marketing activities (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). MO has evolved into two main streams, a behavioural approach proposed by Narver and Slater (1990) and a market intelligence approach offered by Kohli and Jaworski (1990). Narver and Slater (1990) argue that MO consists of three behavioural components: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and multifunctional coordination. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) adopt a different approach and propose that MO is concerned with external information generation about customer needs, dissemination of this information across departments and the organisation-wide response to this information. Similar to external marketing, internal marketing needed operationalisation to enable its adoption (Lings, 1999).

Lings (2004) concluded that IMO is comparable with market intelligence conceptualisation of MO proposed by Kohli and Jaworski (1990). He conceptualised the concept with the aim to understand the tools and processes needed for adoption of IM. In parallel with MO, Lings (2004) therefore argues that IMO is a multidimensional construct that consists of internal information generation, internal information dissemination and responsiveness:

a. Formal and informal gathering of information about the company's internal market (needs of the employees such as job attributes, employee satisfaction and factors that influence satisfaction);
b. Disseminating the information pertinent to the internal market at the firm level (communication of information with the rest of the company);
c. Responding to the information pertinent to the internal market (such as job design, rewards and recruitment).

From the first emergence of the term, the notion of IMO has received attention in the academic literature, with approximately an average of 2.3 papers being published every year. To date, 45 academic papers that focus specifically on the IMO have been published, which were reviewed to explore the concept and define the research questions. Over a half of articles have been published in marketing and management journals, ranked by Association of Business Schools Journal List (ABS). Given the interactive focus of IMO, it is not surprising that 82% of all research in the area has been conducted in the service industry, where employee-customer contact is high, and most papers have conducted the studies within hospitality industry. The findings of the main articles in the area are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Literature review of IMO

Authors	Date	Key points	Type
Lings	2004	- IMO conceptualisation - Service managers can influence the behaviour of employees and make them more satisfied with their jobs and more motivated to serve the customer - Internal aspects of performance need to be maintained to ensure external performance outcomes	Conceptual
Lings and Greenley	2005	- Scale development - Examination of IMO's organisational consequences: CSAT, staff attitudes, staff retention, compliant behaviour, relative competitive position	Empirical
Gounaris	2006	- Refining the IMO concept - Redeveloping the scales based on MO dimensions	Empirical
Gounaris	2008	- Exploration of the antecedents of job satisfaction - Evidence for the relationship between IMO, IM and job satisfaction - Direct influence of IMO adoption on job satisfaction	Empirical
Lings and Greenley	2009	- IMO is an antecedent of MO - IMO positively affects employee motivation - IMO can indirectly affect profitability, since employee motivation translates into CSAT, which in turn affects profitability	Empirical
Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou	2010	- IMO and MO are inter-related - MO adoption results in higher customer perceived value and quality	Empirical

		- IMO adoption has a direct effect on customer perceived service quality	
Yu and To	2013	- Relationships between IMO dimensions - Information generation and dissemination positively affect employee attitudes	
Ruizalba et al	2014	- Scale redevelopment - Addition of work-family balance (WFB) in the IMO measurement scale - IMO is positively related to job satisfaction - IMO positively affects employee commitment both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction	Empirical
Fang, Chang, Ou and Chou	2014	- IMO facilitates the development of external market capabilities - External market capabilities, especially customer-linking capabilities, mediate the relationship between IMO and organisational performance	Empirical
Yu, Yen, Barnes and Huang	2019	- IMO has a positive effect on employee commitment - Organisational commitment partially mediates relationship between IMO and employee retention - IMO can lead to better firm performance through employee commitment and retention	Empirical
Gounaris, Chryssochoidis and Boukis	2020	- IMO is a dynamic capability that positively affects employee interactions - IMO adoption can aid new service development (NSD)	Empirical
Mo, Liu, Wong	2021	- IMO increases internal service quality - IMO indirectly affects commitment through indirect service quality	Empirical

2.1.2 DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION

It is recognised that IMO is a complex multidimensional concept. This section will further discuss the elements that constitute this concept. Lings and Greenley (2005) have identified the following dimensions of IMO: information generation, information dissemination and responsiveness. Each of these dimensions can be further categorised into subdimensions. Table 3 below presents three conceptualisations of IMO, highlighting the variations in terminology used to describe the dimensions. However, despite slight differences, these conceptualisations ultimately convey the same concepts. The IMO dimensions and their meaning will be discussed below.

Table 3. IMO dimensions

Author	IMO dimensions	IMO subdimensions
Lings and Greenley (2005)	Formal information generation	• Written information generation • Face-to-face information generation
	Informal information generation	• Exchanges of value • Employee attitudes and values • Personal situations and factors • Labour conditions
	Information dissemination	• Service offerings • Customers' needs and wants • Product benefits • Corporate strategy
	Responsiveness	• Job design • Incentives and rewards • Training • Social elements
Gounaris, 2006	Intelligence generation	• Identification of exchanges of value • Labour market conditions awareness • Internal market segmentation • Targeting internal segments

	Intelligence dissemination	• Communication between managers and employees • Communication among managers
	Response to intelligence	• Job description • Renumeration system • Management concern • Training
Ruizalba et al. (2014)	Intelligence generation	• Identify value exchange • Internal market segmentation
	Internal communication	• Communication between employees and managers
	Response to intelligence	• Management concern • Training • Work-family balance

INTELLIGENCE GENERATION

Intelligence (or information) generation is concerned with gathering information about the company's internal market, including its employees. This can involve learning about what benefits employees desire, what individual characteristics they have, or what the competing firms have to offer them that this company does not (Lings and Greenley, 2005). Information can be collected via different routes. Lings and Greenley (2005) identify formal and informal information generation. The formal approach usually takes form of face-to-face meetings or written questionnaires about job satisfaction. Informal information generation is just as important, and it is often disseminated during casual day-to-day interactions, for example, in break rooms or over lunch. Gounaris (2006) also states that the basis of intelligence generation should include identification of exchanges of value, i.e., what employee brings to the company and what they expect in return for their effort and time. Moreover, internal information should be concerned with identifying employee groups based on their needs and characteristics, in order to target these groups with relevant information and training more effectively.

INTELLIGENCE DISSEMINATION

Intelligence dissemination (or internal communication) refers to the knowledge flow within the organisation. Effective information sharing is crucial for alignment of efforts, as well as keeping everyone updated about any news or changes, marketing strategies or strategic objectives (Gounaris, 2006). Intelligence dissemination happens on two levels: communication between managers and employees, and communication among employees. This includes sharing organisational goals and objectives, updates about products and strategy, information about employee needs, benefits, training programmes, and opportunities. Regular information exchange keeps employees and managers informed, promotes trust and transparency, and encourages employees to make informed decisions (Lings and Greenley, 2005).

RESPONSE TO INTELLIGENCE

The last IMO dimension, response to intelligence (or information responsiveness), is concerned with actions taken by the company in accordance with the insights they have collected. Responsiveness refers to being adaptive to changing conditions and using information to drive strategic decisions and improvements within the organisation. Management concern reflects the level of care the managers have towards their subordinates and a supportive, respectful work climate (Lings, 2004). Response to intelligence can also translate in adapting training to fit the identified gaps in employees' knowledge, for example, with the use of training programmes. Moreover, companies can use collected information to design fulfilling jobs and fair bonus and salary systems (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006).

2.1.3 ANTECEDENTS OF INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION

Successful IMO adoption depends on various conditions, such as social context, organisational culture, leadership style, and institutional factors (Naudé, Desai and Murphy, 2003; Gounaris, 2008; Gyepi-Garbrah and Asamoah, 2017; Qiu, Boukis and Storey, 2021). Naudé, Desai and Murphy (2003) have found that organisational socialisation, satisfaction, and communication determine the levels of IMO in the company. Gounaris (2008) have found that companies with organisational cultures that promote participation, pleasant relationships, and goal-orientation, are more likely to develop IMO. Gyepi-Garbrah and Asamoah (2017) have also analysed different styles of organisational culture and their effect of IMO. They showed that constructive culture that values individual growth and creativity, as well as passive culture, that promotes traditional hierarchical structure and security behaviours, create favourable environment for IMO adoption. Qiu, Boukis and Storey (2021) believe that to achieve such climate in the first place, there has to be a strong leadership that promotes market-oriented behaviours. Therefore, the main antecedent to IMO adoption is organisational culture that encourages communication, high performance, and customer orientation.

2.1.4 OUTCOMES OF INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION

Understanding the consequences of IMO is important for building the connection with COSE and CX. The most prominent outcomes of IMO are discussed below to later illustrate their potential effect on these concepts. Several authors have explored the influence of IMO on the internal and external outcomes, which are summarised below in Table 4. Based on the article search, there exist 33 ABS-rated papers written about IMO, which have been analysed in terms of the consequences mentioned. The consequences most frequently discussed are employee outcomes, job satisfaction, organisational performance, customer orientation, and CSAT.

The rest of the outcomes that have been mentioned in two or less papers, including new service development and internal service quality, are classified as 'other'. The number of propositions and hypotheses about the relationship between IMO and its outcomes was identified to understand the frequency with which each outcome was studied. The calculation below shows the number of articles in which each consequence was analysed, together with a percentage count (Table 4).

Table 4. Consequences of IMO

IMO outcomes	# of *hypotheses* or *propositions* relating to the relationships	# of studies exploring the relationships	% of studies exploring the relationships
Employee behavioural outcomes	21	16	29.6%
Attitudes	5		
Motivation	1		
Commitment	8		
Empowerment	2		
Retention	5		
Job satisfaction	11	11	20.3%
Organisational performance (financial and non-financial)	8	8	14.8%
Customer orientation	6	6	11.1%
CSAT	7	5	9.2%
Direct relationship	3		
Indirect relationship	4		

Other	8	8	14.8%
Total	61	54*	100%**

**Overall, 33 articles in ABS-rated journals were analysed. Some papers have analysed more than one IMO outcome, resulting in the total of 54 studies*

*** Percentages are calculated out of the total of 54, the total number of studies exploring the relationships (as mentioned above, some articles contain studies on multiple relationships)*

According to the results presented in Table 4, the relationship between IMO and customer orientation was explored in 6 articles, and the IMO – CSAT link was investigated in only 5 papers. This analysis has identified that customer orientation and CSAT are the least studied consequences of IMO, which is surprising given the potential effect of IMO on customer outcomes. This signals a potential gap in the area. The IMO outcomes most discussed in the literature are discussed below.

EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOURS

Employee behaviours is perhaps the most studied area of IMO outcomes. Lings and Greenley (2005) have found preliminary evidence of the relationship between IMO and various employee outcomes. The authors have found that IMO adoption can positively affect staff attitudes such as motivation and job satisfaction, based on the assumption that happy employees provide better service (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Some studies have shown empirical evidence of positive relationship between IMO adoption and employee commitment (Yu et al., 2019; Ruizalba et al., 2014; Mo, Liu and Wong, 2021). Additionally, IMO was found to have a direct effect on employee retention, although the relationship is relatively weak (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Modi and Sahi, 2018). Employee retention can also be indirectly affected by IMO through increased employee compliance and commitment (Yu and To, 2013; Yu et al., 2019). Retaining skilled and motivated employees is particularly important as these individuals can contribute to organisational objectives, and therefore to CX (Yu et al., 2019). Moreover, IMO is also thought to improve in-role behaviours through adoption of organisational strategies and their incorporation in day-to-day work activities (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Lings and Greenley, 2010). For service employees, in-role behaviour would mean displaying empathy towards customers and building a connection with them, which could result in better CX.

JOB SATISFACTION

Several authors have identified that IMO results in higher job satisfaction. IMO enhances communication between managers and employees, facilitating the alignment of values, strategies, and role requirements (Gounaris 2006, Gounaris 2008; Ruizalba et al., 2014). This improved alignment subsequently contributes to increased employee morale, demonstrating a positive effect of IMO on employee satisfaction (Gounaris, 2008). Supporting these findings, the results of empirical study in the hotel sector conducted by Ruizalba et al. (2014) showed that IMO can indeed directly influence job satisfaction of employees. Interestingly, Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez (2009) found that while informal internal information generation has a direct effect on job satisfaction, other IMO dimensions do not have a significant influence. Employee job satisfaction is highly relevant to the customer outcomes, as satisfied, happy employees were found to be more likely to create a positive impression on customers (Gounaris, 2006). In line with this, Martin and To (2013) showed that job satisfaction mediates the effect of IMO on CSAT.

PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

In attempt to link IMO effects to external outcomes, Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez (2009) have explored the relationship between IMO and perceived service quality. They have conducted a dyadic study and shown that IMO can indirectly affect perceived service quality through improved internal communication and better employee performance. In other words, by improving IMO, firms can deliver their service more effectively and therefore be perceived more positively by the customers. However, Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou (2010) have found that IMO adoption can also have a direct effect on customer perceived service quality. This IMO outcome is interesting to observe from the CX perspective, as Brady and Cronin (2001) have found that customers that have a positive experience with the company perceive their products and services to be of higher quality based on the interactions alone.

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Lings and Greenley (2005) propose that IMO can result in higher profits for a firm, as IMO can result in better employee performance and therefore higher CSAT and loyalty. Additionally, Yu et al. (2019) have found that IMO has an indirect effect on organisational performance through increased employee commitment and retention. These authors argue that a firm can have a better competitive advantage and reduce costs if they retain high-performing employees, thus improving financial outcomes. Lings and Greenley (2009) have also shown that employee outcomes, such as motivation, mediate the relationship between IMO and firm performance. Moreover, IMO leads to improved firm's ability to gather and respond to customer information, which in turn leads to a better organisational performance (Fang, Chang, Ou and Chou, 2014).

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction (CSAT) is often mentioned in the IMO literature, since adoption of IMO is linked to better strategy communication and higher employee motivation to perform, which can result in higher CSAT (Lings and Greenley, 2005). Nevertheless, the empirical research on the relationship between IMO and CSAT is limited. Lings and Greenley (2005) propose that there exists a direct positive relationship between IMO and CSAT and in later article, they showed that this relationship is mediated by MO (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Additionally, a partial support for indirect IMO and CSAT relationship through perceived service quality was found by Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez (2009). In support of these findings, Sahi et al. (2013) and Martin and To (2013) have found a direct link between these two concepts. This shows a lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between IMO and CSAT, despite CSAT being one of the most important outcomes for a firm. As literature review has shown, only a few studies have demonstrated a direct relationship between IMO and CSAT. There needs to be more research into the customer outcomes of IMO, which is another reason to study this concept in conjunction with CX.

CUSTOMER AND MARKET ORIENTATION

Narver and Slater (1990) posit that customer orientation is a dimension of market orientation (MO), and the two concepts are often used in literature interchangeably (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). As previously noted, internal and external market orientations are connected, resulting in IMO being a possible antecedent to MO (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Indeed, some studies have shown that IMO dimensions, especially responsiveness, have a direct positive effect on MO (Gounaris 2006; Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou 2010). More specifically, Lings and Greenley (2010) have found that firm's responsiveness to internal information leads to improved external information generation – a key component of customer orientation. However, these authors argue that while the link between IMO and customer orientation is assumed in the field of marketing, it lacks empirical evidence and needs to be further examined. Therefore, there exists a research gap concerning the relationship between IMO and customer orientation.

Most studies have assumed the relationship between IMO and MO, which some authors use interchangeably with customer orientation, but only a few have demonstrated the link between them. Service employees have frequent interactions with customers due to the nature of their work, allowing them to gather market information first-hand. This could be highly beneficial for the company since this information can be used to adapt CX. To address the gap regarding the relationship between IMO and customer orientation, the concept of COSE needs further exploration. COSE is a relatively recent concept operationalised by Hennig-Thurau (2004), which will be discussed later in this Chapter. According to the available information, there is no research exploring the relationship between IMO and this conceptualisation of COSE. This discussion will follow in Chapter 3 that delves into the connections between the concepts in this thesis.

2.1.5 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Although most of the research on IMO lacks theoretical backing, around a third of the ABS-rated articles analysed in this Chapter have explicitly mentioned the theoretical background of their research. Interestingly, researchers have applied a variety of different theories to this subject. It is essential to discuss the theoretical background as IMO is one of the key concepts in this thesis. A thorough understanding of this concept is needed to effectively connect it with COSE and CX. Most of the studies focusing on IMO have utilised equity theory (Adams, 1963), while other have applied social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), and fit theory (Chatman, 1991).

Equity theory has been widely referenced in the literature on IMO as the underlying theoretical background of the relationship between the firm and the employees (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Boukis, Gounaris and Lings, 2017; Tortosa, Moliner and Sanchez, 2009, 2010; Boukis, 2019). Originally proposed by Adams (1963), equity theory is focused on fairness as a key concern in any social exchange. In this context, the primary components of the exchange are the inputs and outputs, where inputs represent the person's contributions, and outputs refer to the rewards received in response to these contributions (Adams, 1963). According to the principles of this theory, equity is achieved when the individual's inputs are roughly equal to the outcomes they receive. When this balance is not maintained, the individual can perceive an over- or under-reward, leading to the feelings of tension.

Applied to IMO, equity theory explains how an increase in employee's perception of organisation's input creates an equity surplus. Internal information generation enables the firm to assess employee satisfaction with the rewards or the outputs they receive from their job (Lings and Greenley, 2005). Based on this information, employers can take action to enhance the outputs employees are less satisfied with (Huseman and Hatfield, 1990). The adoption of IMO practices thus improves employee's perception of the rewards they receive, creating an 'equity surplus', which motivates them to respond to the firms' efforts with increasing their inputs in their daily tasks (Boukis and Gounaris, 2014). This interchange encourages employees to contribute more effort, time, and commitment – behaviours that subsequently enhance CX (Boukis and Gounaris, 2014; Chang, Chiang and Han, 2012). As a result, the equity balance between the firm and the employee is restored (Tortosa, Moliner and Sánchez, 2009).

Another common theoretical background used in the IMO research is social exchange theory. Social exchange theory, that stems from sociology and psychology, deals with the perception of costs and benefits interactions (Yu and To, 2013). Social exchange is one of the main theories on social interaction, based on early works of George Homans (1961), Richard Emerson (1962), and Peter Blau (1964).

These authors' approach to framing the social exchange theory diverge slightly. Homans (1961) viewed social exchange as a function of payoffs, where relations between two parties is contingent on a balanced two-way reinforcement. His work was criticised for neglecting the importance of institutional factors and social norms that also play a role in exchange. Blau (1964) took a contrasting approach, proposing that social exchange is based on expectation of unspecified future return, rather than reinforcement in past interactions. He also points out that mutual trust is the prerequisite for maintaining these relationships. Blau (1964) has also considered the effect on social networks, status, and power that can emerge from the ongoing exchange. Emmerson (1962) accepts both approaches and analyses social exchange from the perspective of reinforcement principle, while also considering the power implications.

Social exchange theory can explain the relationship dynamics between employee and organisation, and therefore how IMO can positively influence employee attitudes (Yu et al., 2019). IMO initiatives are aimed at reinforcing the exchange between the employer and the workers, with the expectation that positive input from the organisation will lead to a positive return from an employee. When there is consistent reciprocity, the relationship would therefore strengthen and continue as long as the exchange of benefits is maintained.

Building on social exchange theory, Rousseau (1990) proposed that there exists a psychological contract between employees and organisation. The author suggests that individuals have certain beliefs regarding mutual obligations in the relationship. For example, an employee believes that hard work should be rewarded with a promise of job security and fair compensation. As opposed to an employment contract, psychological contract is not explicit and is based on mutual promises regarding future behaviours (Rousseau, 1990). Hence, social exchange theory and psychological contract focus on the dynamics of long-term relationships.

Both equity theory and social exchange theory explain the IMO concept from the perspective of achieving a healthy balance between the efforts of employees and organisations. Some authors analyse IMO from a different lens and ground their logic in fit theory. Fit theory refers to a match between the norms and values of an individual with those of the organisation (Chatman, 1991). Employees whose personal values are congruent with organisational values are thought to be less likely to leave, have better work attitudes and contribute to the company through extra-role behaviours (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly III, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991; Kristof, 1996). Nevertheless, circumstances can change. For example, working climate may be different compared to when employee has started in organisation, their role may no longer be fulfilling their personal interests and beliefs. Therefore, employees may find themselves in a situation of mismatch, where they no longer 'fit' with the organisation. From a theoretical standpoint, adoption of IMO strategies could be a way to restore employee-organisation fit through improving satisfaction, empowerment, and supportive climate (Boukis and Gounaris, 2014). In comparison to the other theoretical approaches, fit theory is relatively specific, focusing on alignment between fit and employee behaviours. However, while valuable for assessing person-environment fit, it overlooks the factors, such as recognition, support, and training, that are discussed in this thesis.

Another theory that received less attention in relation to IMO but can be useful in explaining the concept, is service-dominant logic (SDL). SDL was developed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) and aims to explain the process of value creation. SDL refers to skills and knowledge as operant resources, that a firm can leverage for creating value proposition for the customer. SDL is an inherently customer-oriented view, that suggests that customers realise the value that a firm has proposed while using a product or service. Since IMO is concerned with knowledge creation and skills enhancement, Boukis (2019) believes that IMO can be viewed through the lens of SDL to better understand how it creates value for employees and customers. SDL is helpful for understanding the co-creation of products and services between the customers and the firm, which are outside of the scope of this thesis. The focus of this research falls on internal organisational dynamics and their effect on behaviours, meaning that other theories would be a better framework for analysing relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX in this thesis.

Out of the most common theories in IMO research, social exchange theory and equity theory have the most potential for being used as the theoretical framework of this thesis. Social exchange theory emphasises that interactions, including those of employers and employees, are based on mutual benefits. In the context of IMO, organisations that invest into their employees create a working environment that encourages employees to reciprocate, therefore being more likely to engage in customer-oriented behaviours, which are investigated in this research. Equity theory supports and adds to this by focusing on the balance between inputs and outputs in workplace interactions. It states that when employees perceive fairness, their motivation to contribute positively and provide great service increases. Moreover, equity theory explains the case of over-compensation, negative feelings of guilt and distress arise which could lead to a positive behaviour adjustment – a notion that is not recognised in the social exchange theory (Huseman and Hatfield, 1990). A detailed discussion on choosing social exchange theory and equity theory as the theoretical lens for this thesis is presented in Chapter 3.

2.2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

2.2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer orientation is the basis of relationship marketing concept (Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000). The role of contact personnel in customer outcomes and service quality has been recognised but generally dismissed as a part of a broader customer orientation concept. This calls for a better understanding of the role of contact employee behaviour in customer orientation (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003).

To enhance the understanding of how employees contribute to customer orientation, Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) proposed a new concept - customer orientation of service employees (COSE). This conceptualisation includes the following four dimensions: technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). According to the author, it is essential that all these dimensions are present in employee's behaviour at least to some degree to enable them to act in a customer-oriented way. This dimensionality differs from the earlier customer orientation conceptualisations. For example, Dean (2007) proposed conceptualisation of customer orientation that includes customer focus and customer feedback dimensions. Alternatively, Donavan (2004) proposes the following dimensions of CO: need to pamper, need to read customer needs, need to deliver, and need for personal relationship. For the purpose of this research Hennig-Thurau's (2004) conceptualisation can better facilitate understanding of

IMO's influence on employees' capabilities and attitudes, as well as how they can contribute to the overall experience.

Literature review showed the relative lack of research in the field of COSE compared to the other concepts studied in this thesis. Kuppelwieser, Chiummo and Grefrath (2012) note that despite its importance, the COSE model has only been replicated in a few studies. This highlights the gap in knowledge, which this research aims to address by enhancing the knowledge about this concept, its possible antecedents, and outcomes. Nevertheless, existing literature on COSE provides valuable insights for the investigation in this thesis. The main findings in the COSE literature are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Literature review of COSE

Authors	Date	Key points	Type
Hennig-Thurau and Thurau	2003	- COSE is a multidimensional construct that comprises of motivation, decision-making authority, social and technical skills - Antecedents of COSE: role conflict, job satisfaction, commitment, organisational structure, trust, culture, personality and learning orientation	Conceptual
Hennig-Thurau	2004	- Outcomes of COSE: CSAT, commitment, and retention	Empirical
Kim and Ok	2010	- COSE has a direct effect on CSAT, and indirect effect on CSAT through rapport	Empirical
González-Porras, Ruiz-Alba and Parra	2018	- COSE in family business - COSE outcomes include eWOM and CSAT	Conceptual
Mediano and Ruiz-Alba	2019	- COSE in private banking industry - The importance of COSE dimensions is mediated by type of firm and customer segment	Conceptual

		- COSE outcomes: WOM, trust, loyalty to private banker and the firm	

Morales Mediano and Ruiz-Alba (2019) empirically tested the importance of COSE in highly relational services (HRS). By HRS, these authors refer to the industries that are characterised by frequent employee-customer interaction. Morales Mediano and Ruiz-Alba (2019) found that in private banking sector, COSE can help the firm differentiate their offering and therefore have a long-term competitive advantage. Nevertheless, the authors found that in the private banking industry, COSE resulted in customer trust and loyalty to the employee, but this did not guarantee the same sentiment towards the firm. Another study in the banking sector was conducted by Amangala and Ateke (2018). In their study, only technical skills were demonstrated to have a strong effect on customer outcomes. In line with their findings, Bramulya et al. (2016) have also found that COSE has a positive impact on customer behavioural outcomes in the banking industry.

Several authors examined COSE in the context of hospitality industry. Kim and Ok (2010) investigated the customer-employee relationship and demonstrated that COSE is critical driver of customer success. They found that behaviours related to COSE help employees build rapport with the customer, thus strengthening the relationship. González-Porras, Ruiz-Alba and Parra (2018) explored the applicability of COSE concept within the context of family-owned hotels. Similar to previous research, these authors have identified that appropriate level of COSE is positively linked to customers sharing their experience with others, as well as their overall satisfaction with their stay.

2.2.2 DIMENSIONS OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

The dimensions of COSE as suggested by Hennig-Thurau (2004) are technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority. The author separates employee skills into technical and social skills, both of which are needed to respond to customer requests. Technical skills refer to specific knowledge necessary to answer to customer's needs, such as knowledge how to use a particular tool or software. Social skills refer to employee's ability to empathise with the customer and respond to their social needs and preferences. Motivation relates to the employee's emotional response to behaving in a customer-oriented way, their self-perception of ability to act this way and the outcome they expect. In other words, this dimension refers to the internal enthusiasm that drives employees to deliver great experience. Finally, decision-making authority relates to employee empowerment and their freedom to make on-the-spot decisions to serve the customer, should any special requests or issues arise. This dimension is concerned with the level of autonomy that employee possesses in regards to making independent decisions within their job.

However, the significance of various COSE dimensions may vary depending on the desired outcome. It was found that the motivation dimension of COSE had the most effect on CSAT and retention (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Social skills, however, had the highest effect on the emotional commitment of customers, compared to the other COSE dimensions (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). The strength of the effect that each of the COSE dimensions has on the customer outcomes depends on the industry and firm type (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Mediano and Ruiz-Alba, 2019). These authors have found that the relationship is stronger in high-interaction firms, where the communication between the employee and the customer is frequent and continuous, such as travel agencies and private banking. Mediano and Ruiz-Alba (2019) have also found that COSE has a positive effect on customer trust, loyalty and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication.

2.2.3 ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

The vast majority of the research on COSE is focused on the outcomes of customer-oriented behaviours. Nevertheless, Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) have identified several determinants of COSE, which will be discussed in this section. The authors explore the potential antecedents in relation to each of the concepts. When it comes to skills, the authors believe that learning orientation plays an important role in the development of both social and technical skills. By learning orientation, they refer to the desire of an individual to grow and learn, which ultimately results in better performance in their job.

In regard to motivation, Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) outline several organisational factors that determine COSE – role clarity, fairness, and organisational commitment. First, they note that clarity of expectations in their role results in higher motivation levels of employees. The authors also highlight that job satisfaction and fairness are vital, as they contribute to employee's positive emotional state necessary for motivation. Lastly, management commitment and adequate leadership is argued to contribute to employees feeling inspired and motivated.

The possible antecedents of decision-making authority include organisational structure and trust in supervisor (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). The authors believe that an organisation dictates the rules that affect employee's freedom to make independent choices in their daily tasks. They argue that fostering COSE requires organisational structure that empowers employees to make individual choices, rather than punishes them. Trust in the manager was also outlined as a predecessor to decision-making authority. The authors posit that lack of trust with result in employees being less independent, preferring to avoid making their own choices and instead staying on 'safe ground'.

The possible antecedents of COSE, such as role clarity, fairness, organisational commitment and structure correspond with the outcomes of IMO discussed previously. The adoption of IMO is focused on ensuring that the firm is committed to meeting employee's needs and treating them fairly. Some of the IMO outcomes included job satisfaction and empowerment, which according to this antecedent analysis can result in higher COSE levels. Therefore, the connection between IMO and COSE needs further investigation, which will be addressed in Chapter 3.

2.2.4 OUTCOMES OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Several researchers have examined the outcomes of COSE. The relationship between COSE and CSAT have received considerable attention in literature. The direct effect of COSE on CSAT was demonstrated in the works of Hennig-Thurau (2004), Kim and Ok (2010), González-Porras, Ruiz-Alba and Parra (2018), and Amangala and Ateke (2018). These authors have conducted studies in various industries, showing the importance of employee's customer-oriented behaviours on the satisfaction of the customer.

Apart from the positive effect of CSAT, Hennig-Thurau (2004) found that COSE positively affects customer retention and commitment. Moreover, Mediano and Ruiz-Alba (2019) have shown that COSE has a direct influence on customer trust and loyalty. These outcomes are vital for the firm, as they reduce customer churn and therefore lower the costs associated with new customer acquisition. Additionally, several authors have demonstrated that COSE can result in favourable WOM and eWOM (González-Porras, Ruiz-Alba and Parra, 2018; Mediano and Ruiz-Alba, 2019; González-Porras et al., 2019). Positive WOM is another important outcome, as seeing other customers recommending a business can enhance firm's image and attract new customers. Literature review shows that COSE can have important implications of the firm's external outcomes, however, there is a lack of research about this concept. Further investigation is required to better understand the effect of COSE on favourable consequences. Therefore, Chapter 3 will examine the potential link between COSE and CX, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge in this area.

2.2.5 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In the papers analysed in this research, customer orientation was rarely explored through the lens of existing theoretical frameworks. Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) believe that customer orientation, and therefore COSE, is an integral part of relationship marketing theory. Relationship marketing relates to obtaining, maintaining, and enhancing effective relationships with customers (Berry, 2002). He believes that a good relationship with a customer will help attract new customers and avoid loss of customers, thus enhancing organisational performance. Good service and selling skills are essential for preserving and improving the relationship with customers. Hence, relationship marketing is a useful framework for analysing COSE, since it aims to enhance performance of service employees and quality of service.

Hennig-Thurau (2004) argued that customer orientation, and in particular that of service employees, lacked conceptualisation in marketing literature. The author defined COSE as a multidimensional concept and believed that it is essential to relationship marketing paradigm. The majority of COSE literature, however, did not rely on any theoretical background to explore this concept, showing a lack of solid theoretical foundation. However, a broader concept, customer orientation, has been grounded in various theories that could potentially apply to COSE due to the parallels between the two concepts. The theories commonly used in customer orientation research are social exchange theory, conservation of resources theory, and fit theory.

Social exchange theory, as described in more detail in the previous section of this thesis, addresses mutual exchange in relationships and can be applied in the context of employee behaviour. Kim and Qu (2020) suggest that employees would reciprocate the favourable organisational actions by exhibiting positive work behaviours, such as acting in a customer-oriented way. Therefore, when a company is providing its frontline employees with suitable support and tools, they are more likely to respond by treating customers with care. Social exchange theory can also explain the external effects of customer orientation. Colwell et al. (2009) propose that customers identify salespeople's customer-oriented behaviours which results into them being loyal to the salesperson, and later to the organisation itself. Buyers pick up on the cues from the employees and thus judge their intentions and future behaviours. Such information exchange can help form expectations about the service as well as resolve potential conflicts, hence developing the buyer-seller relationship.

Moreover, Kim and Qu (2020) suggest that customers and employees engage in a social exchange, if employee's perceptions of customer interactions are positive, they are more likely to engage in customer-oriented behaviours. Therefore, in line with social exchange theory, organisational internal market orientation can affect customer-orientation of frontline employees, which in turn can lead to a stronger relationship with the customer and loyalty.

Another theory that is used to frame customer orientation research, although from a different angle, is conservation of resources theory. The theory was introduced by Hobfoll in 1989. According to the conservation of resources theory, individuals aim to obtain, retain and preserve resources; and a possibility of threat to lose them will result in stress (Hobfoll, 2002). These resources can include physical, cognitive, social and motivational resources (Wang et al., 2011). Hobfoll (1989) posits that conservation of one's resources is a motivational concept: in the absence of such threat, individuals are expected to develop their resources to offset potential future losses, and while at danger of losing them people would aim to minimise the net loss of their resources.

Customer orientation requires employee to apply a considerable number of personal resources to be able to provide a good experience to the customer (Zhu et al., 2017). According to the conservation of resources theory, if environmental factors cause depletion of employee's resources, they will make an effort to preserve their resources and adjust their behaviour to cope with stress. Therefore, in situations of stress such as job tension, boredom, workplace burnout, an employee would be redirecting their resources away from the customer, thus resulting in lower customer orientation (Zhu et al., 2017; Wu and Shie, 2017; Stock, 2016).

Fit theory has also been used in the context of customer orientation. Individuals tend to view their workplace more favourably and have a better chance of success when their personal characteristics match their environment (Kristof, 1996; Pervin, 1968). In the context of fit theory, Menguc et al. (2016) define customer orientation as an individual value of employees who enjoy satisfying customers' needs and show genuine care about customers' wellbeing. Employees that have a natural predisposition to higher customer orientation are normally a better fit for roles that require frequent contact with customers (Lee, Ok and Hwang, 2016). The authors found that employees that possess such quality can derive meaning from a customer-facing role and therefore have higher job satisfaction. Moreover, the research of Menguc et al. (2016) have shown that employees with a higher customer orientation fit develop better quality relationships with their colleagues, which in turn affects performance and job satisfaction.

For the purpose of this thesis, adopting social exchange theory as a theoretical background for COSE is the most relevant approach. This theory emphasises the importance of reciprocal relationships, highlighting how the relationship between the firm and the employee, as well as the employee and the customer, is based on the perceived benefits and costs. In the context of COSE, social exchange theory therefore can help explain the relationships between internal organisational factors, such as IMO, COSE, as well as the external effects on customers.

2.3. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

While previously firms were focused on differentiating their tangible products, in 1970 the advancements in manufacturing field have levelled, prompting firms to shift their focus to services differentiation and relationship marketing to stand out to consumers (Palmer, 2010; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Although the notion of customer experience is gaining popularity in recent years, it is not a new concept in the marketing field. In 1955, Abbot has stated that people desire satisfying experiences rather than products. He suggests that experiences come from activities that need physical objects (i.e., products) to be carried out. Later, Pine and Gilmore (1998) proposed a contrasting idea and argued that experiences exist outside of goods or services, and that customers look to purchase 'memorable events' staged by the company, whatever they may be. Some researchers, like Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello (2015), believe that CX exists in any service exchange, regardless of the service type.

Verhoef et al. (2009) take a holistic approach and propose a broad definition of CX, stating that it is a multidimensional construct that 'involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer'. CX is created by elements both inside firm's direct control (retail environment, service interface, price, products) and beyond their direct control (online reviews, internal customer needs, peer influence). The authors posit that CX covers the entire experience: research before purchase, purchase itself, user experience, and after-sale support, which can span across multiple channels. To rephrase it, CX is built on all tangible and intangible interactions a customer has with a company, both pre-purchase, during the purchase and post-purchase. A customer forms a perception about the brand based on the environment created by the company: for example, store appearance, website, behaviour of frontline employees, as well as the products and services themselves. In this regard, customer experience is co-created by customers and the company and can therefore be based in service-dominant logic (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017; Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). The summary of the literature review on CX can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Literature review of CX

Author	Key points	Type
Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007)	- Conceptual framework for CX - Roles of experiential dimensions	Conceptual
Puccinelli et al. (2009)	- Consumer behavioural elements that affect their decision process - Suggestions for managing CX	Conceptual
Rose et al. (2012)	- Online customer experience model, its antecedents, outcomes and components	Empirical
Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (2015)	- Customer-experience model - Materialism and experientialism as CX dimensions	Conceptual
Lemon and Verhoef (2016)	- Consolidated existing knowledge of CX - Integrated view of CX across the customer journey - Customer engagement as a component of CX	Conceptual
Kranzbühler et al. (2017)	- Distinguished the organisational and consumer perspective streams of research in CX - Outline future research agenda	Conceptual
Bolton et al. (2018)	- Identified challenges of integrating different sides of customer experience (digital, social and physical)	Conceptual
Flavian, Ibanez-Sanchez and Carlos (2019)	- Classification of the new realities (virtual, augmented and mixed realities) and their role in CX	Conceptual
Hoyer et al. (2020)	- Role of new technologies in every stage of customer journey (pre-, during and post-transaction)	Conceptual

De Keyser et al. (2020)	- Introduction of TCQ (touchpoints, context, quality) nomenclature as a lens for CX research	Conceptual
Kuppelwieser and Klaus (2021)	- Scale creation to measure CX in B2B - CX is a unidimensional concept from customer's perspective	Empirical

Nevertheless, the concept of CX still lacks consensus regarding its definition, dimensionality, and overall connection to other marketing concepts. Researchers such as Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl (2017) and Bueno et al. (2019) note that there exist different interpretations on CX, leading to ambiguity in how it is conceptualised and measured. This lack of agreement complicates theoretical understanding of CX and creates challenges for managers aiming to enhance it. To improve the understanding of CX within the context of this thesis, the following section will discuss and compare various research streams in the field of CX.

2.3.2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE RESEARCH STREAMS

Delineating different streams in the CX research field is important for this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, it enables us to categorise existing research in an organised manner, which helps to identify research direction and gaps in knowledge. Secondly, it guides the choice of relevant conceptualisations, theoretical frameworks, and selection of appropriate methodologies to underpin this research. Lastly, identifying different streams helps us understand how this research fits in the CX field and communicate its objectives clearly and effectively. The following section will discuss each of the identified research streams, their differences, and main academic contributions.

As the literature review has previously shown, CX is a highly interdisciplinary concept. Researchers from multiple fields have contributed to the present knowledge about CX. Amongst this vast variety of topics and fields, four research streams can be identified: conceptual, firm's perspective, customer's perspective, and outcomes perspective (Table 7).

Table 7. CX research streams (own elaboration)

Customer Experience Research Streams			
Conceptual	**Organisational Perspective**	**Customer Perspective**	**Outcomes perspective**
- Focuses on deep understanding the CX as a concept - Explores theoretical and philosophical background of the concept - Introduces new conceptualisations and frameworks	- Focuses on importance of CX to organisations - Discusses strategies, practices and organisational structures that can be adopted by businesses to improve CX	- Seeks to understand CX from the perspective of the customer - Focuses on customer emotional experiences, perceptions, behaviours and preferences	- Discusses how CX can be leveraged to improve relationships with customers and achieve business objectives - Explores and measures the consequences of CX

CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH STREAM

Conceptual research is theoretical in nature, focusing on exploring the concept, synthesising existing knowledge and building frameworks and models around a particular subject. Conceptual papers often adopt critical analysis to assess existing theories and conceptualisations to find inconsistencies and limitations, as well as areas of further research. Based on that analysis, such papers often propose innovative ideas and frameworks, thus playing an important role in advancing the theoretical field of a subject. Conceptual research therefore deepens understanding of the subject, proposes new research questions and paves the way for empirical research.

Conceptual papers are prevalent in CX research due to the complexity and multidimensionality of this concept. Pine and Gilmore (1998) were one of the first researchers who aimed to identify experience dimensions and laid the foundation for understanding experience in hospitality. The authors discuss the transition from traditional product and service-based economy to an economy centred around creating and delivering memorable customer experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that that customers look to purchase ‘memorable events’ staged by the company and propose four experience realms: entertainment, educational, escapism and aesthetics. Entertainment refers to passively enjoying an event without actively participating (e.g. watching a movie), educational dimension involves obtaining new knowledge (e.g. excursions), escapism describes the feeling of a temporary break from the routine, and aesthetics refer to the immersion in the experience, feelings of beauty appreciation.

Verhoef et al. (2009) have greatly contributed to the CX field by integrating past research to identify the determinants of CX. The authors have highlighted the importance of CX management, social environment, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price, brand, and experience in alternative channels. This paper highlights the fact that CX can be affected by a multitude of factors in the service ecosystem. In a similar vein, Palmer (2010) argued that CX is affected by a variety of factors both inside and outside of the firm-customer relationship. Therefore, according to Palmer (2010), relationship marketing theory, which is popular in CX research, may not be suited to understand the holistic nature of this concept. The author has also noted that CX is not static, it depends on emotions evoked in the process and its perception can change over time.

Kranzbühler et al. (2017) highlight the heterogeneity of CX research and call for analysis of two CX sub-dimensions – static CX and dynamic CX. Static CX refers to the experience with touchpoints at one point in time and eventually contributes to the dynamic experience over a period of time. Authors believe that studying CX on two levels will help avoid further dilution or collapse of the concept. Kranzbühler et al. (2017) also note that while many researchers studied CX from either organisational or consumer perspective, there is a lack of overlap between the two streams that needs to be addressed. The authors pose that it is necessary to incorporate the consumer's viewpoint into the organisational perspective to acknowledge the subjective nature of CX.

Vannucci and Pantano (2018) take a different approach to CX and explore the subject of touchpoints – a vital part of experience. The authors divide touchpoints into human (e.g. frontline employees) and digital (technology) and look at encouraging and discouraging factors that affect customer's attitudes to both types of touchpoints. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that CX should be analysed from the perspective of customer journey. They bring attention to purchase stages every customer goes through and create a three-phase framework of CX. During the pre-purchase stage, customers interact with touchpoints such as ads, brand's website and online presence. During the purchase stage, customers interact with products or service, employees, and environment. Experience continues in the post-purchase stage, when customers deal with the consumption itself, engagement, and customer support. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argue that each three of these stages contributes greatly to overall experience.

It is apparent that despite many authors highlighting the fragmentation in the CX field, many researchers agree on a holistic approach to studying the CX concept. The notable complexity of the concept is especially reflected in the conceptual stream that adopts SDL to improve the understanding of CX. This approach recognises the customer as an active participant in value and experience creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The authors argue that high-quality interactions allow customers to co-create unique experience together with organisations. Their view focuses on customer-firm interaction built on the unique and personalised interactions thus making every individual experience different.

A branch of conceptual research on CX focuses on looking at the concept through the lens of SDL and co-creation. SDL highlights that experience is co-created by the actors involved in the service exchange, rather than 'consumers' and 'organisations' (Jaakkola, Helkkula and Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015). Actors in the context of SDL can include the customer, employees, managers, service providers and representatives, competitors, and even government agencies. Looking at CX through the lens of SDL can therefore help to understand the multidimensionality of the concept. In their paper, Jaakkola, Helkkula and Aarikka-Stenroos (2015) developed a framework for CX and co-creation, outlining the multiple dimensions to analyse experience from every angle. These dimensions are individual and collective, customer-led and provider-led, in the service and beyond the service, present time and broad time frame, dyadic and systemic, and finally lived and imaginary experiences. The authors note that one of the drawbacks of current CX research is the lack of understanding of how organisational aspects affect CX – a topic that this thesis aims to address by analysing the relationship between IMO and CX.

Chandler and Lusch (2015) state that in a service exchange, actors offer value propositions to each other. The authors define value proposition as 'an invitation from one actor to another to engage in service, or to align connections and dispositions to one another'. Based on that, Chandler and Lusch (2015) argue that CX stretches from pre-purchase to post-purchase, and goes through the cycles of stimulation, replication, synchronisation, and dissipation. Similarly, Bolton et al. (2018) emphasise the multitude of factors affecting CX and propose that CX exists in digital, physical, and social realms. The authors believe that due to high importance of the social influence, organisations must facilitate customer interactions to help them co-create experiences. To achieve that, Bolton et al. (2018) argue that organisations need to find ways to align employee and customer goals through changing organisational culture and aligning various internal departments to focus on customer-orientation.

The analysis of the conceptual research stream shows that CX has been studied from various angles and lens, and while there may not be clear consensus on CX framework or definitions, the vast majority of research agrees that CX is a complex multidimensional concept that is constantly evolving and is dependent on many factors.

ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

As mentioned above, CX is co-created by several actors. The majority of CX research, however, considers either organisational or customer perspective. Both viewpoints tend to consider customer's emotional, cognitive, and physical responses to experience, as well as company-customer relationship. However, it is useful for the analysis undertaken in this thesis to separate the two research streams. Customer perspective stream is mainly concerned with the understanding CX factors and customer responses, often taking a psychological approach, while organisational-focused stream aims to develop strategies on how CX can be built and leveraged. Organisational perspective focuses on the relationship between CX and organisational factors, such as service design and experience management strategies (Kranzbühler et al., 2017).

Mosley (2007) stresses that organisational culture plays a crucial role in orchestrating favourable experiences and gaining competitive advantage. Adoption of internal marketing and internal branding strategies helps organisations to communicate the brand promise to their employees and cultivates customer orientation. Such culture could ensure the delivery of on-brand CX, since it enables value alignment between the company and employees and communicates the importance of employee-customer interactions for the overall experience (Mosley, 2007). Similarly, Harris (2007) takes an inward perspective and believes that the role of employees in building customer experience is paramount since it is them who enact brand values and attributes. Drawing on examples from business case studies, he also notes that simplicity and clear internal communication of brand values, as well as authentic interest in involving employees in CX creation, are crucial for nurturing customer-oriented culture. Indeed, employee satisfaction and commitment have been found to positively affect customer's perceptions of service interaction (Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013; Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier, 2015). When employees are supported with proper tools, they can understand customer desires and values, and therefore successfully communicate them to the company (Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021).

Other authors focus on experience design processes, in particular touchpoint design and management. Homburg, Jozíc and Kuehnl (2017) have found that CX management falls under three categories: managing cultural mindsets, strategic directions, and firm capabilities. The cultural mindsets refer to the firms' orientation to recognise the existence of various touchpoints and evoke customer's experiential response towards them. The company must then be aware of the customer journey with their product or service and be willing to adapt and align the touchpoints to improve CX. Strategic direction refers to organisations' active response to touchpoint awareness, such as design of touchpoints according to brand identity, ensuring their consistency and creating new touchpoints where necessary. Lastly, capabilities refer to company's resources that make touchpoint management possible, for example, presence of relevant communication channels and measurement mechanisms.

In a further attempt to help businesses create clear CX practices, De Keyser et. al (2020) conducted a thorough review of the CX concept and offer a TCQ (touchpoint, context, qualities) nomenclature to implement a better CX design. The authors propose a framework that encourages companies to first identify the existing touchpoints, their nature and how they can be adjusted. Since there are many factors affecting experiences, the business needs to identify the individual, social, market and environmental contexts that can influence experiences. Lastly, De Keyser et. al (2020) suggest that companies ought to identify the qualities of experiences, including their dimensions, time frame, valence and level of extraordinariness.

Managing CX therefore remains a relevant topic due to its importance for competitive advantage and complexity. To successfully manage CX, businesses need to consider all actors and factors at play, both internal (e.g. employees, culture, designs and processes) and external (e.g. customer's preferences, social and governmental factors).

CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE

Unlike organisational perspective research, customer perspective research places the customer at the centre of investigation. It aims to understand CX from the viewpoint of the customer, not the company, focusing on their perceptions, emotions, behaviours, and preferences.

Froehle and Roth (2004) have explored the factors affecting experience in various scenarios with different levels of technological involvement in service delivery. The authors believe that interactions with service employees may be perceived differently depending on the extent of technological presence in the service interaction. These authors have found that factors such as information richness belief, duration of contact, intimacy level, and attitude towards the service provider will carry different weight depending on how much human interaction a tech-mediated service delivery requires.

Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig (2007) recognise the powerful nature of CX on customers' emotions, behaviours, and attitudes. They describe the term 'transcendent customer experience' (TCE) as an extraordinary experience characterized by feelings of self-transformations and awakening, unity with something larger than self. Such experience type goes beyond customer's expected levels of satisfaction, stands out in their memory, and often leads to a deep sense of loyalty and satisfaction. Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig (2007) have found that TCEs can enhance customers' relationships with other people, values, and symbols, thus leading to the integrations into the brand community. The findings of this research support the belief that lasting memorable experiences are highly powerful in shaping customer behaviours.

Chang and Horng (2010) aim to understand and measure CX from the perspective of the customer. The authors conceptualise CX as an emotional judgement towards all these factors in conjunction. Based on the studies conducted, Chang and Horng (2010) identified the following critical elements of experience: customers' personal characteristics, their companions, physical surroundings, service providers (e.g. employees), and other customers. Deshwal (2016) have looked further into the customers' characteristics and their influence on the experience. The authors have found that female customers experienced 'peace-of-mind' more other than male customers, and older customers were found to me more outcome-oriented than younger ones.

Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) have also found that experiences do not only depend on the service or product itself and discovered that customers have varying preferences for experiences. They profiled customers using a CX scale and segmented them into five types: hedonistic, action-oriented, holistic, inner-directed, and utilitarian. Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) describe the holistic group to be interested in all aspects of experience, while on the other extreme, utilitarian consumers have little regard to brand experience. Hedonistic customers value sensory and emotional gratification, action-oriented ones focus on behaviours and inner-directed customers focus on their internal sensations and thoughts.

Verleye (2015) explores the customer side of experience from a co-creation perspective. Similar to previous research, the author agrees that experience depends on customer individual characteristics. However, she defines these determinant characteristics to be the expected co-creation benefits and customer role readiness. Expected benefits can be of different types, such as hedonic, cognitive, social, personal, pragmatic, and economic. Customer role readiness refers to the motivation of the customer to perform their co-creative role. From the environmental side, Verleye (2015) also found that technologization (availability of tools and devices) and connectivity (possibility of getting help from other people) play an important role in shaping experiences.

OUTCOMES PERSPECTIVE

While conceptual, organisational and customer perspective streams focus on deepening the understanding of the concept of CX itself as well as its determinants, the outcomes perspective stream investigates the impact CX on various outcomes. This stream explores the consequences of CX for both organisations and customers. Customer satisfaction, loyalty, word-of-mouth, brand perception, revenue, and profitability are some of the CX outcomes widely discussed in literature (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Zhang et al., 2017; Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi, 2006).

Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) argue that experiences that lead to positive outcomes are likely to make customers want to repeat them. Moreover, brand personality attributes allow customers to relate to the brand and express themselves through it, thus adding value to the experience. Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) have found a positive direct link between experience and loyalty, as well as an indirect influence of experience on loyalty through brand personality.

Adding to the CX research in B2B settings, Biedenbach and Marell (2009) explore the influence of CX on brand equity, the intangible value and perception of the brand in the minds of the customers. The authors have found that positive CX significantly and positively affects brand equity dimensions, such as brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Creation of brand equity is a complex and lengthy process, thus investing efforts on improving initial CX can help companies achieve the desired brand equity in a more efficient manner.

Online retailing experience is often different than in-person experience due to the lack of trust and inability to try or touch the product. Rose et al. (2012) have found that cognitive and affective experiences during online shopping positively affect CSAT. The findings also report that CSAT mediates the relationship between CX and customer trust and repurchase intentions, making CX a highly important factor for online retailers.

Ali, Hussain and Ragavan (2014) explore CX in the hotel industry. Hospitality industry operates in 'experience economy' where the primary goal for a business is to create high quality experiences. Drawing on the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998) and their proposed dimensions experience (education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics), the authors conducted a study that links CX dimensions its outcomes. Ali, Hussain and Ragavan (2014) have found that in hotel industry, education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics significantly and positively affect customer loyalty and memories associated with their visit.

Managing CX successfully can lead to favourable organisational performance according to Grønholdt et al. (2015). The authors have found that both cognitive and affective experiences, as well as relevant employee training, internal company communication and management involvement lead to differentiation of product offering. Differentiation is crucial for competitive advantage and has been found to positively influence financial and market performance Grønholdt et al. (2015). These findings were supported by Klink, Zhang and Athaide (2020) who saw positive relationship between CX and firm's financial performance in their study. Moreover, the authors found that the effect of CX on performance increases with higher market and technological turbulence, as well as increased competition. These findings once again confirm the role of CX in organisational success.

Based on SDL and service ecosystem framework, Zhang et al. (2017) focus on understanding the relationship between CX, customer engagement, and WOM. The authors define customer engagement as a 'psychological state that emerges during the process of interacting and co-creating experience with other stakeholders'. Zhang et al. (2017) have found that positive experiences lead to higher customer engagement, which in turn leads to WOM intention – both of which are favourable outcomes for a business looking to increase their customer base and maintain loyalty.

POSITIONING PRESENT RESEARCH

This thesis aims to deepen the understanding of CX concept as well its relationship with organisational concepts of IMO and COSE. The conceptual framework developed in this thesis establishes a connection between organisational practices and customer's perceptions of experience. It is proposed that adopting a management approach that treats employees as internal customers, can deepen firm's understanding of their external customer too. This framework explores the effect of management practices such as employee empowerment, training, recognition, and internal communication on fostering employee customer orientation and improving CX. Therefore, due to its nature, this thesis combines characteristics of conceptual and organisational perspective streams.

2.3.3 DEFINING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Literature review has shown that there exist many definitions of CX. There is currently no consensus on CX definition, partially due to general fragmentation of the field (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). Moreover, this confusion is exacerbated by researchers using the terms 'customer experience' and 'service experience' interchangeably. To address this, a brief discussion about the similarities and differences between these concepts is needed. As summarised by Chandler and Lusch (2015), service experience is generally defined as 'the outcomes of interactions between organisations, related systems/processes, service employees and customers, that create cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses, resulting in a mental mark, a memory'. Therefore, similarly to CX, service experience recognises various factors of experience such as cognitive, affective, sensorial, and behavioural elements. Service experience can relate to any actors involved in the exchange, which could include customers, suppliers, business partners and employees, while CX is only concerned with the customer (Veiga et al., 2019). Literature review showed that many authors use these terms interchangeably due to their similarity. The difference between these formulations is recognised, however, for the purpose of this research, the overlap between the terms CX and service experience is substantial. Therefore, this thesis will draw upon literature that discusses both CX and service experience.

It is widely recognised that the concept of CX was introduced by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). They argue that customers do not always behave rationally and view consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The authors emphasize the importance of emotions and feelings in consumption process and customer behaviours, thus laying the groundwork for understanding the experiential nature of consumption. Even though Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) did not explicitly define the concept, their article has brough attention to a new way to look at consumption, resulting in a stream of research dedicated to CX.

In subsequent research, various authors have suggested different definitions of the CX concept across different fields. CX definitions and descriptions vary depending on the context of industry and research stream. To illustrate that, Table 8 below reflects some of the most used and cited definitions of CX across multiple fields.

Table 8. CX definitions in literature

Field	Definition/Description	Authors
Experiential marketing	An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event.	Pine and Gilmore (1998)
	CX originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. The experience is personal and implies the customer's rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual response. Customers evaluate the experience based on their expectations and their contact with the touchpoints.	Gentile (2007)
Branding	Experiences occur as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things. Experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values that replace functional values.	Schmitt (1999)
	Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.	Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009)
Service design	An experience occurs when a customer has any sensation or knowledge acquisition resulting from some level of interaction with different elements of a context created by the service provider	Gupta and Vajic (2000)

	An actor's subjective response to or interpretation of the elements of the service, emerging during the process of purchase and/or use, or through imagination or memory.	Jaakkola, Helkkula and Aarikka-Stenroos (2015)
	Customer experience is comprised of the cognitive, emotional, physical, sensorial, and social elements that mark the customer's direct or indirect interaction with a (set of) market actor(s).	De Keyser et al. (2015)
	Multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey.	Lemon and Verhoef (2016)
Retailing	The customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer, created by elements within and outside of retailer's control.	Verhoef et al. (2009)
Online marketing	A psychological state manifested as a subjective response of the customer to the e-retailer's website	Rose et al. (2012)
Services marketing	The customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm relating to their purchasing behaviour.	Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Consumer research	A gestalt of affective and cognitive elements resulting from a service encounter that may lead to attitudinal outcomes such as satisfaction and repeat purchase intention and behavioural outcomes such as loyalty and word of mouth.	Roy (2018)
Service research	A customer's subjective, directed, and multidimensional mental responses to an interaction with an experience partner at a touchpoint in a customer journey stage.	Gahler, Klein and Paul (2022)

These definitions differ in their focus, with some touching on CX outcomes (such as WOM, repeat purchase and loyalty), customer expectations, interaction with touchpoints, and various other elements. However, there is an overarching idea in all these descriptions that experience is customer's subjective response to any interaction with the product or service at various stages of customer journey. Such response involves a multitude of factors including emotional, sensorial, affective, and cognitive reactions.

Due to the nature of this research, and its positioning in the conceptual and organisational CX research streams, the definitions proposed by Verhoef et al. (2009), Klaus and Maklan (2013), Jaakkola, Helkkula and Aarikka-Stenroos (2015), and Lemon and Verhoef (2016) are the most relevant to this thesis. Additionally, the conceptualisation proposed by Bolton et al. (2018), which identifies three realms of experience - physical, digital, and social - is also recognised. Drawing on the works of these authors, the following broad definition of CX is proposed:

> *Customer Experience can be considered as a multidimensional holistic phenomenon that encompasses the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to interactions with the different elements of firm and its employees, shaped by a myriad of factors, both within and outside the firm's control, and extending across digital, physical, and social realms.*

The absence of clear definition poses difficulties for theory development and conceptualisation of CX (Palmer, 2010; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). Based on the differing approaches, scholars have also outlined various dimensions of CX, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.4 DIMENSIONS OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

As discussed previously, there is no clear consensus on the dimensionality of CX. Nevertheless, there are similarities and overlaps in CX dimensions proposed by various authors. The table below summarises the dimensions of CX and their descriptions found in existing literature (Table 9).

Table 9. CX dimensions in literature

Author	Dimensions	Descriptions
Pine and Gilmore (1998)	Education experience	Obtaining new knowledge
	Entertainment Experience	Passively observing an event such as a movie or show
	Aesthetics Experience	Immersing in the experience, appreciating surroundings
	Escapism Experience	Feeling of temporary break from the routine, being someone else
Brakus, Schmitt and Zaratonello (2009)	Sensory dimension	Sensory appeal such as taste, sight, sound, touch, and smell
	Affective dimension	Inner feelings and emotions
	Behavioural dimension	Physical experiences and actions

	Intellectual dimension	Thinking, problem-solving and other cognitive processes
Chang and Horng (2010)	Physical surroundings	Appeal to five senses upon entering service environment
	Service provider	Personal interaction with service providers
	Other customers	Interactions with other customers
	Customers' companions	Effect of the presence of a companion
	Customers themselves	Personal characteristics of a customer
Rose et al. (2012)	Skill	Skill of the customer
	Challenge	Challenge of skills
	Telepresence	Immersive experience
	Interactive	Speed of website
	Connectedness	Connection to other shoppers
	Customization	Customization of web page
	Control	Of information, purchase decisions
	Ease-of-use	Of online pages
	Aesthetic	Appearance
	Beneficial	Needs satisfaction
	Cognitive experiential	Flow of the experience
	Affective	Invoking feelings
Bagdare and Jain (2012)	Joy	Enjoyment is source of motivation for purchase
	Mood	Influence on mood can result in shopping intentions
	Leisure	Shopping activity
	Distinctive	How unique the store/experience was
Garg, Rahman and Qureshi (2012)	Convenience	Ease at every contact points
	Service scape	Physical environment
	Employees	Attitudes of service employees
	Online functional elements	Usability of the website and its components
	Presence of other customers	Perception related to presence of other customers
	Online aesthetics	Website appearance and style
	Customization	Extend to which a service can be personalised
	Core service	Main service attributes
	Value addition	Supplementary services that come in addition to main service proposition
	Speed	Rapidity of service delivery
	Marketing mix	price, place, promotion, product
	Service process	The flow of service
	Online hedonic elements	Escapism feelings that arise while using the website
	Customer interaction	Interface that allows customers to interact with the company
Klaus and Maklan (2012)	Peace-of-mind	Emotional benefits based on the perceived experience of service provider, interactions, familiarity
	Moments-of-truth	Influence of service provider's behaviour on customers future repurchase decisions in case of a mishap; customer's perception of risk

Klaus and Maklan (2013)	Outcome focus	The importance of goal-oriented experiences in customer behaviour; reducing customers transaction cost of considering new providers
Deshwal (2016)	Product experience	Importance of customer's perception of having choices and ability to compare offerings
Verleye (2015)	Hedonic	Psychological benefits
	Cognitive	Knowledge about product, technology, etc
	Social	Relational ties among participants
	Personal	Status and recognition
	Pragmatic	Meeting needs
	Economic	Monetary rewards
Kuppelwieser and Klaus (2021)	Pre-purchase	Information gathering, evaluation and decision making prior to purchase
	Purchase Experience	Making an actual purchase
	Post-purchase	Assessment and usage of purchased product

There is a wide array of CX dimensions that have been identified in the past literature. The authors adapted and created scales depending on the context and purpose of study, which resulted in many unique dimensions, as well as some repetitions and similarities between them.

Schmitt (1999), one of the first authors who attempted to define the dimensions of CX, proposed that there exist five experiential 'modules': sensory (sense), affective (feel), cognitive (think), physical (act), and social identity (relate) experiences. According to the author, the 'sense' aspect relates to the stimulation of customer's senses, 'feel' – to emotions, 'think' engages the customer in creative or problem-solving experience, 'act' refers to behaviours and 'relate' appeals to the customer's desire to be perceived by others in a certain way while using the product. Drawing on the work of Schmitt (1999), Fornerino, Helme-Guizon and De Gaudemaris (2006), Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) have proposed the following dimensions: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational components. Pragmatic component refers to actual usability of the product or service, lifestyle dimension appeals to the customer's values and beliefs, and relational – to a sense of belonging it can provide.

While there is no clear agreement on the specific dimensions of CX, the dimensions discussed in the literature do not come too far from each other. Various authors, such as Nambisan and Watt (2011), Rose et al. (2012), Zhang et al. (2014) and Zhang at al., (2015) and Keiningham et al. (2020) have used dimensions that are very similar in nature to the ones described above using different terminology, for example: cognitive and affective state, hedonic experience, usability experience.

Therefore, the dominant stream of CX literature seems to recognise the following dimensions of CX: sensorial, affective, cognitive, pragmatic, and social (Table 10).

Table 10. Most common CX dimensions

CX dimension	Meaning	Examples
Sensorial	- Parts of customer experience that directly influence human senses of smell, sight, hearing, touch, and taste	- Lush stores where customers can smell, touch, and see products in use before buying them - Hotels choosing a signature smell that a customer would always recognise upon entry
Affective	- Provoking specific feelings in customers in relation to the firm or its products, through branding, advertisement, etc.	- Coca-Cola advertisements and campaign often designed to elicit feelings of happiness and nostalgia - Some companies provoke feelings of urgency and fear to prompt customers to use their product (e.g. pharma, legal services)
Cognitive	- Engaging customers in cognitive processes, such as creative thinking, problem solving or challenging norms	- LEGO creating a portal where customers suggest new ideas for products - Dove famously challenging current beauty standards in their advertisements
Pragmatic	- Refers to actual use of the product or service and whether it satisfies the needs of a customer	- User experience of iMac in day-to-day life - Customer service being able (or not) to answer customer query
Relational/Lifestyle	- CE component that elicits the feeling of belonging to a	- Owning and driving a prestigious sports car and the

	social group, or expressing customer's values and beliefs	social image customer obtains with it - Using sustainable or environmentally friendly brands that reflect customer's values

In contrast to the dimensionality discussed above, Bolton et al. (2018) take a different approach in identifying CX elements. They posit that CX exists in three dynamic realms – digital, physical, and social. While they use similar terminology to other authors' definition of CX dimensions (terms 'physical' and 'social' appear in the descriptions of the dimensions above), they offer a more general understanding of CX components. These authors adopted this conceptualisation to illustrate the interconnectedness of CX elements and bring attention to the overlapping influence they have on one another.

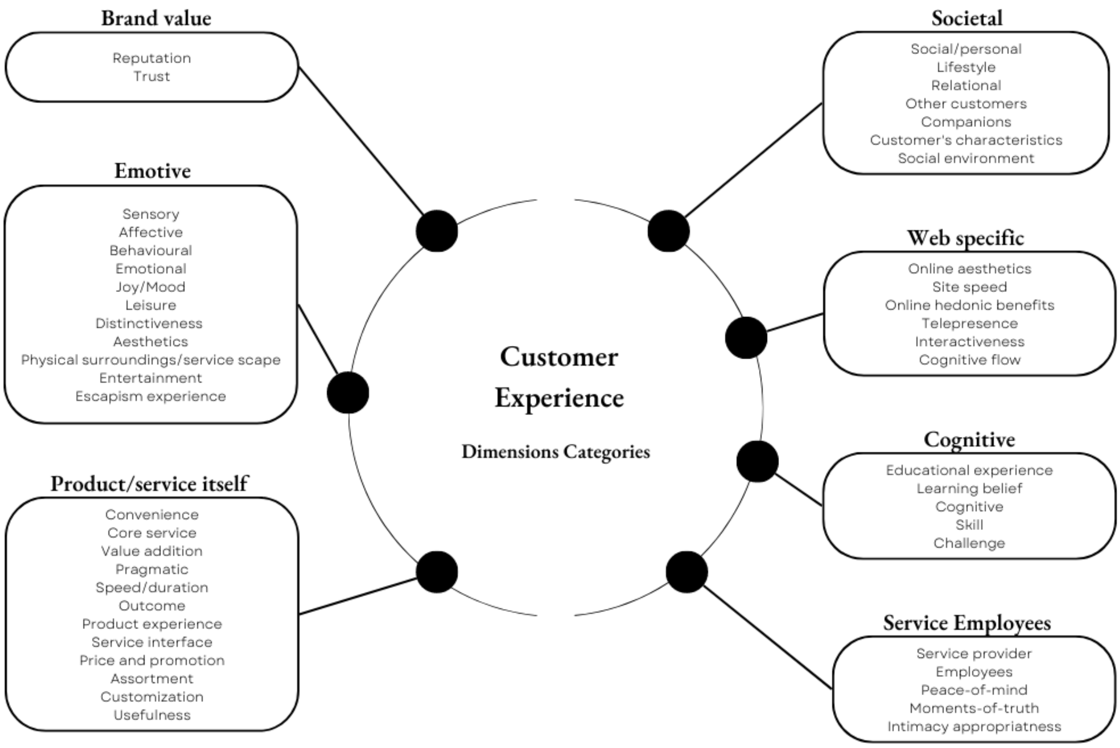
Digital realm refers to the emerging technologies and technological changes that affect firms' ability to deliver CX, for example, apps for ordering and paying at the table, internet of things (IoT), and virtual realities (Bolton et al., 2018). All these aspects of digital world influence consumer behaviour and expectations, to which firms must adapt accordingly to stay relevant. Physical realm includes physical environment, such as decoration, location, present cues, and symbols that shape customer interactions with employees and other customers, thus creating a memorable experience. Lastly, social realm refers to human interaction between all actors involved in a customer journey (employees, other customers, firm's partners). Social realm reflects the changes in society and population trends. These realms do not just exist separately, they often intercept one another. For example, demographical trends can influence the adoption of certain technologies (i.e. social realm affects digital realm). Similarly, emerging technologies affect the way we communicate and expect to be communicated, or alter physical experience of consumption, such as AmazonGo or virtual reality displays in stores (digital realm influence on physical realm). Similarly, coffee shops and restaurants offering customers the option to pay using a QR code changes the need to interact with service employees. Bolton et al. (2018) argue that companies need to gain a full understanding of these realms and their integrations within the customer journey to be able to leverage co-creation and deliver customised customer experience.

Beyond the debate on CX dimensions, research in the area has developed into streams that pursue different goals and therefore create more disparity around the concept. Studies that look at CX from organisational perspective emphasise that firms can design experiences and interactions in a way that favours organisational targets, under the assumption that customers perceive these experiences the way that the firm has intended (Kranzbühler et al., 2017). In contrast, consumer-oriented stream assumes that the firm does not deliver value, and it is instead co-created by the customer. This perspective focuses on customers' behavioural and psychological responses to experience, specifying that it is highly subjective and can be based on personal and social differences as well as previous interactions with the company (Kranzbühler et al., 2017). There is therefore a discrepancy between the way a company designs customer experience and what the customers actually experience. Kranzbühler et al. (2017) call for creation of new CX models that bring together both perspectives and explore how customer journey as seen by the customer can be integrated into organisational structure. Exploring the effect of firm's IMO adoption level on CX could help bring these perspectives together.

Researchers have approached CX at different angles, attempting to describe the components that comprise experience, how these components affect each other and how external trends affect them. Contrasting versions of CX dimensions and organisational vs. customer perspectives demonstrate the complexity around the topic of CX. However, it also illustrates the fragmentation that exists in this research area. The authors tend to design CX questionnaires to fit the purpose and context of their studies, which resulted in lack of consensus on the accepted dimensionality of CX. While practitioners have not yet agreed on a consolidated measure of CX, they have presented various ways to approach the subject from different angles. As a result, CX has evolved to be a rich and complex concept.

Drawing on the literature review, the aforementioned dimensions are synthetised below based on their theme and meaning (Figure 1). The analysis of the existing scales for CX identified similarities and general recurring themes in the dimensions used to measure this concept. They can be grouped in the following categories: emotive, societal, cognitive, purchase stage, web specific, product, and service employees. Brand value category refers to customer's trust towards the brand, their perception of brand's reputation and loyalty to the brand. Emotive category assesses aesthetic parts of the experience that provoke feeling. This includes the physical look of the venue, atmospheric elements such as music, light, smell that collectively set a specific mood in customers. On the other side, product category refers to the more pragmatic factors of experience, such as convenience, speed of service, price, and assortment. Societal category addresses the alignments of customer's values, needs to relate to others and display social status that arise from being a customer of a specific brand. This category also includes the effect of other customers' presence on CX. Web-specific category refers to the experience with using firm's online resources. Cognitive category refers to the customer's perception of being intellectually engaged, for example, learning something new or having a thought-provoking experience. The last category assesses the immediate effect of service employees on customer experience, which can include style of communication, professionalism, ability to deal with arising problems or willingness to go above and beyond for customer's needs. The summary of the dimensions analysis is shown below (Figure 1).

Figure 2. Synthesised CX dimensions (own elaboration)



The different perspectives on CX components will be considered in the later chapters and existing conceptualisation will be adapted to fit the purpose of this research. The service employee dimension poses the most interest for the purpose of this research. Service employees are highly relevant in the context of all three concepts explored in this thesis – IMO, COSE, and CX. IMO refers to a business approach where a company places a strong important on its internal customers, i.e. employees. In the case of hospitality industry, CSAT and CX are also highly influenced by the interactions with service employees (Brady and Cronin, 2001). One of the aims of this research is to analyse the mediating effect of COSE on the relationship between IMO and CX. Therefore, to measure CX in a way that aligns with the research objectives, this thesis will focus primarily on the 'service employees' dimension of CX.

2.3.5 EMERGENCE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

CX is a uniquely complex concept. The debate around dimensionality and measurement of CX poses difficulties for practitioners who aim to improve it. Yet, due to the importance of CX outcomes for businesses, managing CX is becoming increasingly important. With the shift from goods-dominant view to the service-dominant logic, a more customer-oriented approach that favours customer satisfaction and relationship management became the norm for many organisations. The rise of social media gave even more voice to the customer and dramatically increased the number of channels of communication between the customer and the company.

Every channel and interaction that a company has with its customers (e.g. website, app, salespeople, venue) is called a touchpoint, a concept that will be discussed in detail later in this Chapter. Such multitude of potential touchpoints gives businesses a great opportunity to develop more sophisticated experiences, resulting in CX now becoming the primary way for businesses to differentiate themselves from competition (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). A recent study conducted by Gartner (2019) has found that 67% of businesses compete mostly or entirely on customer experience, and this number is expected to rise to 89% by 2022. Nevertheless, while the importance of the Customer Experience Management (CXM) is recognised in business as well as academia, it is still not well understood (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017). Building on the aforementioned definition of CX, Abhari, Sanavi and Wright (2021) operationalize CXM as managing co-creation opportunities regarding emotional, cognitive, sensorial, behavioural and social experiences. Conceptualisation of CXM, being a management concept, can aid us in understanding the link between IMO and CX, since IMO is concerned with internal management practices.

Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl (2017) took a grounded theory approach to explore the concept of CXM using literature research and field data. The theoretical underpinnings used in this research were a combination of resource-based view, SDL, and dynamic capabilities. As the result of the grounded theory procedure, the authors define CXM as a management approach that includes three main pillars: a company's cultural mindset towards CX, strategic directions for creating CX, and firm capabilities to maintain CX.

The second pillar refers to a firm's strategic direction for designing CX. According to the authors, CXM approach would involve ensuring the cohesion and consistency of touchpoints relative to the brand image and proposition. To achieve a good CX a firm would also need to design the touchpoint journey to be seamless and convenient for the customer depending on the context of interaction (e.g. online vs real-life).

The third pillar of CXM, firm capabilities, refers to intangible resources of the firm – its processes and daily operations that enable CX. Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl (2017) argue that that firms with CXM should be able to allocate resources to four main capabilities: the design, monitoring, adaptation, and maintenance of touchpoints.

Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl (2017) also argue that CXM has not been demarcated enough from other marketing concepts, such as customer relationship marketing (CRM) and market orientation (MO). The authors maintain that CXM is a separate, comprehensive marketing concept that differs from the rest in its composition and goal. MO is primarily focused on customer satisfaction and financial performance, which is meant to be achieved through certain employee behaviour, cross-functional coordination, and dissemination of market data throughout the company. CRM prioritises customer retention through building profitable customer relationships and using market data to successfully enhance and maintain such relationships to achieve higher profits. The goal of CXM, however, is to increase customer loyalty by designing a journey from the customer point of view, thus creating favourable experiences. This is achieved by carefully curated and continuously adjusted touchpoints, hence leading to a culture oriented at a long-term growth and is perhaps less transactional in its metrics compared to CRM and MO.

Understanding the effects of IMO adoption and COSE on the experience will add to the existing knowledge about CXM. If significant effect is found, practitioners would have a clearer roadmap to managing experiences through careful information collection, dissemination, and response.

2.3.6 TOUCHPOINTS

CX is created in a multitude of ways, some of which are initiated by the firm. However, customer behaviour during the stages of customer journey and their interactions with the environment designed by the firm also play a crucial role in shaping experiences. Due to this, several authors argue that CX is co-created by both the firm and the customer, rather than designed by the firm alone (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017; Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). Therefore, to successfully manage CX, companies must provide cues along the customer journey to direct the customers into enjoying their products and services the way the company intends, as well as create points of communication with customers to collect data about their experiences (Teixeira et al., 2012). These 'cues' are called touchpoints in the marketing field.

The concept of touchpoints plays a crucial role in CX (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017). According to the authors, touchpoints refer to any contact, verbal or nonverbal, online or in person, that a customer has with a company and can therefore associate with it. Traditionally, the majority of CX originated during interactions with touchpoints created by firms (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Every firm, product or service can have countless touchpoints that customers interact with before, during and after purchase. Some of the examples of touchpoints are ads, website, physical environment, packaging or presentation, customer support, or even payment experience. Nevertheless, not all touchpoints have the same level of significance for every firm. Companies need to identify which of their touchpoints have the most effect on customer outcomes. Such touchpoints are usually referred to as 'moments of truth' (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

However, technological developments have led to the appearance of other touchpoints that are not directly regulated by the companies. Existence of various social media sites has enabled customers to seek and share information about companies with each other. Nowadays, customer experience is shaped not only by customer's interactions with a firm, but also by customer's interactions with other customers with help of online communities, review sites, influencer accounts, and many more. This makes CX a result of co-creation between customers, firms, and external stakeholders (Kandampully, Zhang and Jaakkola, 2018).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) have categorised touchpoints in four categories: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and external touchpoints. Brief explanations of each category are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. CX touchpoint types

Touchpoint category	Explanation	Examples
Brand-owned	- Designed by the firm - Are fully under company's control	- Marketing campaigns - Website - Packaging - Price
Partner-owned touchpoints	- Designed by the firm together with its partners - Jointly controlled and managed by the firm and the involved partners - Can have influence on the brand-owned touchpoints	- Any touchpoints created together with a partner (e.g. marketing agency): - Advertisement and social media created in partnerships - Some app functionality - Distribution channels
Customer-owned	- Touchpoints that are part of the experience, but are outside of the firm's direct control - Customer behaviours and actions	- Customer forums - Online customer communities (e.g., IKEA Hackers)
Social/External	- External factors that affect customer experience during customer journey - Outside of firm's direct control	- Social environment during purchase/consumption of a product/service - Reviews

In alignment with other touchpoint classifications, brand-owned and partner-owed touchpoints are considered to be firm-initiated, while customer-owned and external touchpoints are customer-initiated (Anderl, Schumann and Kunz, 2016). This separation is based on how much direct control a company has over design and management of touchpoints. While firms have little power to affect customer-initiated touchpoints, there still could be useful learnings that companies can extract by monitoring them.

In addition to this touchpoint classification, some authors have proposed that touchpoints can be digital and human (Smilansky, 2017; Vannucci and Pantano, 2018). Vannucci and Pantano (2018) argue that service employees are an important touchpoint that contributes to CX. Human touchpoints involve direct human interaction, typically between sales assistants or employees and consumers. Employees therefore must employ specific strategies to effectively build lasting relationships with customers. When employees fail to establish positive relationships and instead exhibit unpleasant in any way behaviour, consumers experience psychological discomfort which ultimately leads to a negative CX and lack of desire to repurchase (Vannucci and Pantano, 2018). Similarly, Sultan (2018) notes that employees are a crucial brand touchpoint across various stages of customer journey, including purchase, post-purchase, and service-failure stage. The author has found that successful management of touchpoints, including employees, can lead to a higher relationship quality and positive WOM.

Creating a good CX would therefore require a company to place importance on creating touchpoints all throughout the customer journey in such a way that a firm can generate emotional response from customers through these touchpoints (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017). Employees not only serve as one of the customer touchpoints but also have the responsibility to manage and adapt other touchpoints within their control. Given the positive effect of IMO practices on employee outcomes, IMO adoption can create a good foundation for the design and control of these touchpoints. Employees that are customer-oriented, motivated, well-informed of company's goals and trained to respond to information will be in a better position to manage touchpoints in a way that enhances CX. Chapter 3 is focused on discussing the potential ways IMO and COSE can affect CX, based on which a conceptual framework is developed.

2.3.7 ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Due to the complexity of CX, researchers have proposed various combinations of CX antecedents and determinants. Verhoef et al. (2009) for example, argue that main determinants of CX are: social environment, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price, and promotions. They also recognise the dynamic nature of the subject and believe that these factors are influenced by one another as well as by external factors. Fatma (2014) adds brand performance and multichannel interaction to the list of CX antecedents. In an online environment, experience tends to have a different set of determinants than that of a physical environment. Bilgihan, Kandampully and Zhang (2016) explored CX in online retail and proposed a completely distinct set of drivers, including but not limited to easiness to locate, perceived enjoyment, ease of use, and social interactions.

Other authors take a different approach and emphasise the role of customer-employee interactions in CX. Abhari, Sanavi and Wright (2021) took an organisational perspective and found that successful employee experience management leads to better CX management (CXM). Vannucci and Pantano (2018) also recognise the importance of employees in enhancing CX and argue that service employees are one of the customer touchpoints that form their experience. These authors found that service employee's social skills level can determine the quality of CX. Similarly, Delcourt et al. (2013) have shown that employee's emotional competence can directly and positively affect CX.

Nevertheless, due to the complexity of this concept discussed in this Chapter, there seems to be a lack of consensus regarding the factors that contribute to high CX. To effectively manage and enhance customer experiences, it is crucial to understand the determinants that influence them. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of CX antecedents by examining the impact of IMO and COSE on CX.

2.3.8 OUTCOMES OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The outcomes most studied in CX area are eWOM, CSAT and customer loyalty. Each of these outcomes can have influence on firm performance, so they will be briefly discussed in this section.

eWOM

One of the important outcomes of CX is electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Jeong and Jang, 2011; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Zhang et al., 2017; Siqueira et al., 2019). Since the rise of Internet use, traditional word-of-mouth communication has extended to the web, with individuals increasingly engaging in eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The authors define the eWOM concept as any statement about the company or products communicated by customers, that is available to large groups of people on the Internet. Rosario, de Valck and Sotgiu (2020) further defined the concept, addressing some of the inconsistencies is formulation of the terms and proposed a following definition: 'eWOM is consumer-generated, consumption-related communication that employs digital tools and is directed primarily to other consumers.

Most of the studies have been focusing on the consequences and characteristics of eWOM, such as customer behaviours, usefulness of eWOM communication, perceived credibility, and adoption. Sparks and Browning (2011) and Ladhari and Michaud (2015) have found that positive eWOM strongly affects customers' inclination to book a hotel, increases their trust in the firm and improves their attitudes towards the firm. Similarly, Matute, Polo-Redondo and Utrillas (2016) and See-To and Ho (2014) showed that customer's eWOM can have an effect on the firm performance, for example, through purchase and re-purchase intention, trust, and value co-creation. In the hospitality industry, eWOM effects are particularly important as they can either generate more demand or detract customers from the business, making it the key outcome of CX (Xu and Li, 2016).

While eWOM consequences and characteristics have received considerable attention in literature, there still no consensus on what drives customers to engage in eWOM behaviour in the first place (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Serra-Cantallops, Cardona and Salvi, 2020). There's a reason to believe that CX can affect customer participation in eWOM. Jeong and Jang (2011) have found that positive dining experiences restaurant drive customers to spread the good word online to help the restaurant and to share their positive feelings with others. Siqueira et al. (2019) have also argued that positive experiences lead to higher involvement in both traditional WOM behaviours as well as eWOM. In their research, Klaus and Maklan (2013) have found a strong positive relationship between the concepts of CX and eWOM. Bilgihan, Kandampully and Zhang (2016), noted that customer's interaction with various touchpoints can influence where and with whom they share their experience.

Nevertheless, the causes of eWOM behaviour are still debated in the literature, with authors disagreeing on what causes customers to share reviews online. Hennig et al. (2004) argue that customers involvement in eWOM is mainly explained by the following motivations: social benefits, economic incentives, concern for others and self-enhancement. Cheung and Lee (2012) found that other social motivators, namely reputation, sense of belonging, and enjoyment of helping are antecedents of eWOM. From a different angle, Liang et el. (2013) propose that consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is one of the antecedents of eWOM, along with subjective norms and technology adoption. Serra-Cantallops, Cardona and Salvi (2020) found that service quality and emotional experiences of customers can have a significant effect on their eWOM participation. Therefore, more research is needed to understand how and to what extent CX affects eWOM behaviours.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

CSAT is often mentioned in discussions about CX, with some authors even using these terms interchangeably. Fatma (2014) conceptualised CX and proposed its antecedents and outcomes, arguing that CSAT is driven by experience. Caruana (2002) have found that CX is a key determinant of CSAT and posits that overall satisfaction with experience leads to customer loyalty. In their empirical research, Klaus and Maklan (2013) have found that CX has a statistically significant positive effect on CSAT. Nevertheless, the relationship between CX and CSAT is subject to debate due to their connection, especially in regard to which concept precedes another. One can argue that positive experience with a brand will lead to a customer being satisfied with its products and services. However, satisfaction with separate elements of interaction with a firm can lead to an overall positive experience. The exact link between these concepts is still undefined (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Klaus and Maklan, 2013).

CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Customer loyalty is incredibly important for organisational performance. Loyal customers reduce the firm's costs of sales and marketing, are less likely to switch to competitors and spread positive eWOM online (Bowen and Chen, 2001). It is reasonable to assume that when customers have a pleasant experience with a company, they would likely come back to this firm in the future, shall they require their products or services again. Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi (2006) and Fatma (2014) have argued that firms that generate positive emotional experiences automatically create lasting customer loyalty and managing CX can help firms to increate loyalty. Klaus and Maklan (2013) have conducted empirical research and found that CX indeed has a strong positive effect on customer loyalty and suggest that CX may be a stronger predictor of loyalty than satisfaction.

These CX outcomes have significant implications for a firm's overall performance, highlighting the necessity of understanding CX and its determinants due to its critical impact on organisational success. This thesis aims to advance this understanding by proposing that IMO and COSE influence CX. This will be achieved by first developing a conceptual framework, followed by conducting empirical studies in the next chapters.

2.3.9 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Researchers generally took one of the two theoretical approaches when studying CX – consumer behaviour theories and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL). Both approaches are discussed in this section.

The first theoretical approach to examining CX is through the lens of consumer behaviour theories, such as attribution theory, consumer value theory, and goal theory. Attribution theory refers to the perception of inference of cause (Kelley and Michela, 1980). Some authors have argued that customers attribute various elements of their interaction with the firm (e.g. promotions, service, environment) to other factors such as brand quality (Puccinelli et al., 2009). This causality then plays an important role in how customers perceive the brand and their experience with it. Another theory often applied in CX research is consumer value theory. Consumer value explains why customers choose to buy or not buy certain products or services, or choose one firm over another (Holbrook, 1999). Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) apply this theory to CX concept and posit that customers have expectations of utilitarian and hedonistic values when making purchasing decisions, and their experience depends on whether these expectations have been met. Utilitarian values refer to functional value of product or service, while hedonistic value refers to experiential, emotional values. To achieve a high level of CX, a firm needs to balance customer's perceptions of these two values to satisfy their customers (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007). Lemke, Clark and Wilson (2011) take a more outcome-based approach and adopt goal theory in the context of CX. The authors posit that customers have certain goals when looking to purchase a product or service, and therefore evaluate their experiences based on the contribution to their goals that the company has provided. Most papers on CX have employed one or the other consumer behaviour theories, but several authors have used terminology that belongs to service-dominant logic (SDL) throughout their papers, making SDL the second most popular theoretical background for CX (Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl, 2017).

SDL is concerned with explaining the process of value creation and states that firms alone cannot create value, but rather they co-create it together with the customers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This theoretical framework therefore emphasises the experiential nature of service value (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The SDL perspective on service experiences has reshaped the broader understanding of business. It has shifted the attention of both academics and practitioners away from just focusing on creating the experience, to focusing instead on how each person uniquely interprets the experience within their own context.

The multitude of touchpoints, some of which are created by the firms and some by the customer, show how experience is created by both the organisation and its customers. CX also recognises the role of all actors involved in co-creating experience. It is not only the managers who decide how experience is designed, but also service employees who participate in the delivery, customers themselves, and their social network that shapes their desires and decisions. This is in line with one of the SDL premises that states that there are multiple actors participating in creation of value. Increased interactivity of service and technological developments that gamify experience have also allowed customers to directly contribute to the product design either by being involved in the decisions or by 'test-driving' the products or services (Edvardsson, Enquist and Johnston, 2005; Flavian, Ibanez-Sanchez, Carlos, 2017). Many researchers have adopted SDL in relation with CX (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007; Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl, 2017; Lemke, Clark and Wilson, 2011).

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This Chapter examines the connections and interrelationships between IMO, COSE, and CX based on the findings from the literature review. The research propositions are put forward and a conceptual framework linking these concepts is developed. This Chapter also provides an overview of the role of theory in marketing, as well as theoretical foundations of this research. In this Chapter, an overview of social exchange theory is provided, and equity theory is introduced in a supporting role, highlighting its relevance to understanding fairness in the exchange processes. These theories form a foundation for analysing how IMO, COSE, and CX interact.

3.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The previous Chapter presented the key concepts that will be studied in this thesis, as well as their antecedents, consequences, and theoretical backgrounds. This Chapter will examine the relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX, which were briefly outlined in Chapter 2. In order to develop a conceptual framework that connects these concepts, the links between each of them need to be analysed first. This discussion will follow in the next sections.

3.1.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The first research question of this paper sets to investigate the relationship between IMO and CX. In the beginning of this research, a positive relationship between IMO and CSAT was identified. This pointed to the possibility that there is a link between IMO and CX, which may be promising and relevant considering the increased interest in this area of study. CX is known to have a positive influence on CSAT (Fatma, 2007; Caruana, 2002; Klaus and Maklan, 2013). The relationship between CSAT and CX, and the potential link between IMO and CSAT means that there is a possible connection between IMO and CX. First, a brief discussion will be provided on the existing evidence regarding the influence of IMO on CSAT, which has prompted the exploration of the effects of IMO on CX.

Some authors have proposed that IMO is linked to CSAT (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Martin and To, 2013; Sahi, Gupta and Seli, 2013). IMO aims to improve internal market conditions, which means that employees are more likely to feel satisfied (Gounaris, 2008). Lings (2004) suggests that satisfied workers stay in the company for longer, which allows them to develop the skills and thus provide a better service for customers, ultimately leading to higher CSAT. Later, it was empirically proven that IMO directly and positively influences CSAT (Lings and Greenley, 2005). Lings and Greenley (2010) also suggest that when employees perform their roles appropriately and according to the firm's strategy, customers evaluate their interactions with employees positively and are therefore more satisfied.

Since there is evidence of IMO influence on customer perceptions of service, it would be logical to assume the positive relationship between IMO and CX. However, the literature review has shown a lack of strong academic backing, which signals that there is a missing link in this relationship. To explore this gap, this research investigates the relationship between IMO and CX.

IMO fosters an environment where employees are treated as internal customers, addressing their needs and ensuring they are motivated and equipped to contribute positively to CX (Gounaris, 2006; Lings and Greenley, 2009). Through elements like internal communications and information response, IMO ensures that employees and managers understand their role in the organisation, including that of the customer journey (Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou, 2010). This alignment of roles and values within the company means that IMO can create a consistent, customer-centric culture. Therefore, internal communication not only empowers employees, but also fosters consistent service quality across CX touchpoints (Vanucci and Pantano, 2018).

Firms' practices play a big part in setting the correct structure and favourable environment so that their employees can deliver great service. Wilder, Collier and Barnes (2014) argue that hiring the right people with internal motivations to serve customers in not enough for creating a great service. Organisations must actively promote certain employee behaviours, set expectations, and educate frontline employees on how to adapt CX. Their study proved that organisational structure oriented at empowering and training employees results in higher empathy levels and creativity which then lead to better service experiences.

Involving employees in design of CX is crucial because employees truly know the customer, understand their needs, and employees are often the ones to deliver the brand experience (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). Bharwani and Jauhari (2013) set to explore the role of employees in the experience economy and proposed a new construct – Hospitality Intelligence. Hospitality Intelligence encompasses service employees' emotional, cultural and experiential intelligence, and is believed to be crucial for the firm's success in delivering high CX. Organisations that manage employee experience well were found to have successful CXM implementation and CX co-creation (Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). These authors showed that appropriate internal practices such as job crafting and employee engagement platforms lead to successful CXM.

Job design and employee engagement are some of the elements of IMO adoption (Gounaris, 2006). When employees' needs are met, they are more likely to adhere to organisational standards and values that directly impact customer perceptions (Lings and Greenley, 2010). Lings and Greenley (2010) argue that IMO adoption results in increased in-role behaviours of employees, which include gathering customer feedback and desires and communicating this valuable information back to their managers. Additionally, since IMO highlights the employee-manager and manager-manager communication, it improves the flow of information gathered by the employees about the customers, making sure that it is acknowledged and distributed through the company. With that information, a firm would be better positioned to successfully design CX touchpoints.

Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno (2014) found that organisational readiness is a strong predictor of successful customer relationship management and ability to deliver memorable CX. By organisational readiness, they describe organisational factors such as management support, training, and organisational structure that allows collection of useful customer relations information. Organisational readiness as defined by Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno (2014) therefore reflects organisational level of IMO adoption. Intentional creation of an internal culture that prioritises feedback loops and internal support can therefore have an impact on how customers perceive their interactions and experiences with the business. Hence, it is fair to assume that IMO can positively influence CX by creating internal alignment through internal communication and supportive management. Based on the above, the following is proposed:

Research Proposition 1: IMO has a direct positive effect on CX.

3.1.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Various authors argue that adoption of IMO strategies can help promote customer-oriented behaviours (Lings and Greenley, 2009, 2010; Gounaris, 2006, 2008; Fang, Chang and Chou 2014, Al Samman and Mohammed, 2020). Organisational-wide IMO adoption increases in-role behaviours of service employees and motivates them to provide high-quality service (Lings and Greenley, 2010; Lings and Greenley, 2009). The authors argue that IMO facilitates the communication within the company and thus equips employees with the information necessary to provide service. Moreover, higher level of IMO exhibited by the managers encourages front-line employees to gather and respond to customer feedback.

Additionally, IMO was found to improve firm's customer-linking capabilities by inspiring front-line employees to provide better service and therefore develop and sustain relationships with customers (Fang, Chang and Chou, 2014). Similarly, Al Samman and Mohammed (2020) have found that internal marketing activities have a strong effect on customer orientation both directly, and indirectly through affective commitment and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, one of the key determinants of COSE, has been found to be positively affected by IMO adoption (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003; Gounaris 2006, 2008). According to the social exchange theory and equity theory, employees would reciprocate the positive inputs made by the organisation towards them (Yu and To, 2013). When employees feel valued and cared for, they are more likely to feel the need to respond in kind by putting more effort into their tasks (Lings and Greenley, 2010). Therefore, it is fair to assume that IMO could lead to a higher customer orientation by enhancing job satisfaction of service employees.

There are links between IMO and specific dimensions of COSE – motivation, skills and decision-making authority. Gounaris (2006) proposes that adoption of IMO will result in an increase of participative management and introduction of internal marketing strategies, which both lead to higher employee empowerment. Employee empowerment, or authority, is necessary for making on-the-spot decisions when providing service (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). Since authority is one of the COSE dimensions, IMO could lead to higher levels of COSE through empowering employees. Another COSE dimension, employee motivation, has also been found to be positively linked to IMO practices. Lings and Greenley (2009) have found that IMO adoption results in higher motivation levels of employees, that is necessary for performing in a service role. The third dimension of COSE, social and technical skills, can be developed with aid of training programmes (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003; Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999; Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021). Training is an integral part of IMO concept, that pertains to the response dimension, hence, companies with higher IMO adoption are expected to have better training programmes (Gounaris, 2006).

Despite the existing links between IMO and COSE concepts discussed above, the direct relationship between these two concepts remains understudied. This thesis therefore aims to address this research gap by exploring how IMO can influence COSE. Based on the existing evidence, the following proposition is put forward:

Research Proposition 2: IMO has a direct positive effect on COSE.

3.1.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The role of employees in CX has been widely recognised in research (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier, 2015; Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013). Due to their intangible nature, services are characterised by the interaction between employees and customers and are often difficult to be perceived separately from these interactions (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013). One can imagine, for example, dining at a fine restaurant with delicious food but treated poorly by an employee at the entrance or being served cold food or brought the wrong order. In this case, the dining experience would not be overly positive, no matter how beautiful the decorations are or how tasty the food is, because it would be hard to separate these factors from the overall memories of the evening. Brady and Cronin (2001) explored similar dynamics in their research and found a strong positive influence between customer orientation and service quality and overall CSAT. Interestingly, these authors also found that when customers have a positive experience with customer-oriented firms due to better interactions with frontline employees, they perceive their goods and services to be of a higher quality.

Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim (2013) have defined CX as the interaction quality between employees and customers and their level of satisfaction. Their study shows that employee's level of customer orientation positively and directly influences customer's perceptions of interaction quality and their satisfaction. Given that the authors defined CX to be comprised of these two variables, it was shown that customer orientation has a direct effect on CX. Vannucci and Pantano (2018) support these findings and emphasise the role of service employees in CX, stating that service employees are the human touchpoints that customers encounter in their journey. The authors note that employee's skills, especially social skills, can significantly affect CX through building positive relationships. If they fail to do so, the customers may resort to digital touchpoints instead which will change their experience completely.

As mentioned above, COSE is a multidimensional concept that consists of the following dimensions: employee motivation, skills and decision-making authority (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). The authors also suggest that motivation and social skills of employees have the strongest effect on customer outcomes, such as CSAT. Similarly, Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno (2014) argue that employee motivation is crucial for creating personalised customer experiences in organisations with high employee-customer contact, such as hospitality industry. In addition to motivation, employee social skills are necessary in managing customer emotions. Delcourt et al. (2013) found that employee emotional competence perceived by customers has a direct positive influence on CX and customer loyalty. Apart from social skills, technical skills which are also a part of COSE conceptualisation, have been shown to improve the management of CX (Salehi, Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 2014).

Decision-making freedom for frontline employees is essential for creating a personalised experience for the customer (Värlander and Julien, 2010; Hannif, Cox and Almeida, 2014). When employees have the autonomy to make decisions, they can tailor interactions and services to create meaningful experiences for the customer. Flexibility can allow service employees to address specific customer requests and resolve issues promptly without the need to get manager's approval. COSE highlights decision-making authority as one of the crucial elements of customer-oriented behaviours, thus increasing potential for great service delivery. Drawing on this, the following is proposed:

Research Proposition 3: COSE has a direct positive effect on CX.

3.1.4 MEDIATING EFFECT OF CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Previous sections established the effects of IMO on COSE and COSE on CX. These interrelationships suggest that COSE is a crucial link between IMO and CX. IMO enhances internal communication and employee satisfaction; however, these effects need a mechanism that will translate them to improved CX. Conduit, Matanda and Mavondo (2014) argue that frontline employees are 'boundary-spanners' that interpret firm's internal information and communicate it to the external customer, making them a crucial link in simultaneously achieving internal and external customer orientations. These authors argue that employees are perceived as the representatives of the company, reflecting its image through interactions with customers. As previously established, IMO plays a significant role in shaping employee behaviours (Gounaris, 2006, Lings and Greenley, 2010; Yu and To, 2013). These behaviours subsequently influence the perceptions of the customer and their experience (Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013; Delcourt et al., 2013; Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). Therefore, since COSE is concerned with customer-oriented behaviours of frontline employees, it may have a mediating effect on the relationship between IMO on CX.

Tortosa, Moliner and Sánchez (2009) have demonstrated that perceived customer-employee interaction quality mediates the effect of IMO on customer satisfaction. This highlights the critical role of employees' behaviours in connecting the firm and the customer and translating internal improvements into external outcomes. Additionally, McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier (2015) believe that employees are one of the actors who play an important role in experience co-creation between the firm and the customers. They argue that it is crucial for employees to understand the importance of every interaction with the customer, deeply read them and engage with them on a personal level. Similarly, Abhari, Sanavi and Wright (2021) emphasise the importance of frontline service employees in managing CX. The authors posit that the firms should use information systems targeted at satisfying employees' needs through support and engagement, as these systems equip employees with the necessary tools and motivation to deliver great CX. These findings highlight that employees' skills and behaviours act as a bridge between the firm and the customer, translating internal changes into positive customer outcomes.

Adoption of IMO practices that are designed to equip employees with the relevant knowledge, skills, and motivation can result in enhancing COSE, as proposed earlier. Higher levels of COSE enable employees to provide a meaningful personalised service, thus offering a greater experience. Therefore, COSE is a crucial link between IMO and CX. Based on this evidence, the following research proposition is put forward:

Research Proposition 4: COSE mediates the relationship between IMO and CX

In summary, this research proposes that IMO influences CX directly, as well as indirectly through COSE. An overview of the propositions and their corresponding justifications are provided in Table 12:

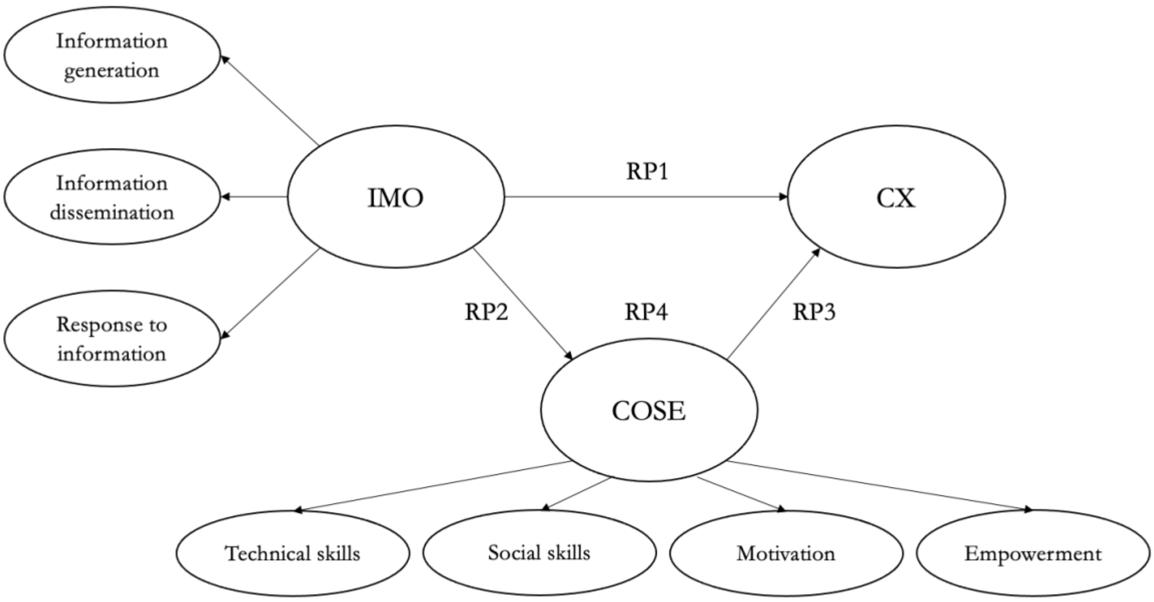
Table 12. Summary of research propositions

Research proposition	Summary
RP1: IMO has a direct positive influence on CX	- There is evidence that IMO positively affects employee motivation, attitudes, customer-oriented behaviours and performance, which can lead to higher CX - IMO allows the firm to collect relevant data about customers to gauge their perception of experience, which then allows companies to adjust it by managing touchpoints - CX is an antecedent to CSAT. A few studies proved the positive effect of IMO on CSAT, which points to a relationship between IMO and CX
RP2: IMO has a direct positive influence on COSE	- IMO has been found to positively influence market orientation, which includes CSAT as one of its dimensions - Several studies found a direct relationship between IMO and customer orientation - Response to internal information can influence employee motivation, skills, and authority, which are the dimensions of COSE
RP3: COSE has a direct positive influence on CX	- Customer-oriented employees can effectively identify and respond to customer needs, possess the necessary knowledge and social skills to respond to customer's emotional need and there provide them with better service and experience

RP4: COSE mediates the relationship between IMO and CX	- IMO affects the skills, motivation and authority dimensions of COSE, which have been linked to better experience

Literature review and the aforementioned research propositions served as a foundation for developing the conceptual framework for this thesis. The conceptual framework is shown below (Figure 2). This framework aims to help the investigation of the direct relationships between IMO and CX, IMO and COSE, COSE and CX, as well as the indirect effect of IMO on CX through COSE.

Figure 2. Proposed conceptual framework (own elaboration)



To reflect the conceptual framework proposed above, there is a need to redefine CX to align with the research objectives outlined earlier. In Chapter 2, a broad definition of CX was put forward based on the literature review and the positioning of this thesis within the CX research streams. However, the main focus of this thesis is the influence of employee-customer relationship on CX. To answer the research questions this research sets to address, a more focused CX definition is proposed:

Customer Experience (CX), in the context of this thesis, refers to the customer's subjective responses to the elements of the service, particularly influenced by the interactions and relationships with service employees.

3.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.2.1 USE OF THEORY IN MARKETING

Theory helps scientists and practitioners to explain the world around us and base hypotheses on. In academia, there exist many definitions of theory. Theory is a useful linguistic tool for academics to understand and organise the complex reality (Hall and Lindzey, 1957; Bacharach, 1989). In Kerlinger's (1979) definition, a theory is as a set of interrelated variables and specified relationship among them that aims to explain a phenomena. Theory allows scholars to understand and predict the outcomes, as well as to describe and explain the processes (Colquitt, 2007).

In marketing specifically, Hunt (1983) aimed to define the concept of theory based on the meaning of theory in sciences literature. In his view, a marketing theory can qualify as a theory if it is comprised of systematically related set of statements, includes some law-like generalisations, and empirically testable propositions. He stresses that law-like generalisations give theory the ability to explain and predict the real-life phenomena. Gummesson (2002), on the contrary, argues that a scientific approach to marketing theory is inappropriate, given the multidisciplinary and highly practical character of the field. He believes that developing a general marketing theory would be more beneficial for understanding the relationships within the field. A theory-in-use approach can help create organic marketing theories that rely on real-life data, reflect the true behaviour and are relevant to practice (Gummesson, 2002; Zeithaml et. al, 2020).

Indeed, marketing is unique in its nature. Merve (2007) believes that due to the interdisciplinarity of the field, it is often necessary to borrow theory from various disciplines, such as psychology, economics, and sociology. However, application of theories from different areas, although beneficial, can lead to challenges in understanding and developing contributions (Wilson, 2021). Some authors go as far as to say marketing theory lacks development and the value of theory is generally overlooked in the field. Therefore, it is common in the marketing field to use multiple theories while explaining the same concept, as long as the theories do not contradict. The same strategy will be adopted in this thesis, using theories that are relevant to each concept in order to deeply understand the connection between IMO, CX and COSE. Social exchange theory and equity theory will provide valuable insights into understanding the connections between these concepts.

3.2.2 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory is one of the most dominant theories in organisational behaviour research (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This theory is based on the idea that a relationship between people is based on the costs and rewards of their social interactions (Blau, 1964; Emmerson, 1962). According to these authors, people weigh the benefits and the risks of the interaction, such as information, emotions, status, and time. Social exchange theory posits that individuals will try to maximise the rewards and reduce the risks of interactions, thus pursuing relationships where the benefits are greater than the costs (Homans, 1961).

According to the social exchange theory, people feel compelled to reciprocate positive behaviours, and based on this behaviour, trust and loyalty are built (Blau, 1964). In other words, when individuals receive kindness or other positive actions from others, they feel the need to return the favour to maintain this mutually beneficial relationship. In the context of this thesis, social exchange theory can explain how IMO can affect COSE by framing the relationship between the firm's practices and employees as an exchange of benefits. If employees perceive that an organisation is putting efforts into employee well-being, they feel valued by the company. This elicits positive feelings in employees, such as emotional comfort and feeling appreciated (Yu and To, 2013). When that happens, employees return the favour to the company by displaying in-role behaviours (Lings and Greenley, 2005; Lings and Greenley, 2010). With greater IMO adoption, employees receive benefits such as increased managerial support, recognition, and empowerment, so in return they are more likely to engage in customer-oriented behaviours such as showing care, empathy, and going the extra mile for the customer, which can lead to an improved experience.

On the other hand, when it comes to employee-customer relationship, social exchange theory proposes that employees would feel obligated to reciprocate good customer attitudes by behaving in a beneficial way towards the customer, thus strengthening their relationship. Alternatively, if a customer shows disrespect towards the employee, then the relationship will be damaged, and the employee would be less likely to display customer-oriented behaviours (Lavelle et al., 2023). A reciprocal relationship is crucial for building trust and loyalty between the firm and the employee, as well as the employee and the customer. Therefore, social exchange theory can help explain the conceptual framework proposed in this thesis.

Additionally, social exchange theory is compatible with the pragmatic paradigm that guides this research. This philosophical approach highlights the nature of experience and states that knowledge is inherently social, viewing it as a tool to navigate the world (Morgan, 2014; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Pragmatic approach therefore closely aligns with the idea that behavioural responses are affected by individuals' perceptions (Lukka and Modell, 2010). For instance, if a person perceives the cost of a relationship to be greater than rewards, they may pragmatically choose to end it and seek a better option.

3.2.3 SUPPORTING ROLE OF EQUITY THEORY

Equity theory is also concerned with balance in social exchanges, but this theory approaches it in a slightly different way. While social exchange theory is focused on maximising the personal benefits and minimising the cost (i.e. 'profit') in social interactions, equity theory takes a less individualistic approach. Proposed by Adams (1963), equity theory is based on the idea that individuals are concerned with fairness in any social exchange. The fairness is judged by the amount of input and output from either side. Equity is achieved when the ratio of inputs and outputs approximately equals to the other party in the relationship. Moreover, Rosseau (1990) posits that there exist implicit psychological contracts between an employee and organisation, suggesting that individuals have beliefs about mutual obligations in a relationship. For example, an employee may expect that hard work will lead to job security and fair compensation. When their expectations are not met and the fairness balance is disrupted, individuals may feel over- or under-rewarded, leading to feelings of tension and desire to restore the fairness by adjusting the outputs (Adams, 1963).

In the context of this research, employee support, flexible work hours, and training, can be considered inputs from the company side. From employee's perspective, they respond with outputs – putting more effort to perform their tasks, solve customer's problems and delivering great experience. According to equity theory, if an employee perceives that the company is investing more recourses into them than they reciprocate, the employee will likely try to increase positive work behaviours to match the efforts of the company and restore fairness. The opposite is true: if an employee perceives that their contributions are not adequately rewarded, they are likely to respond by decreasing their effort at work.

Equity theory therefore explicitly addresses the effects of being over-rewarded in an exchange, which results in more positive behaviours to restore the fairness. Social exchange theory focuses on a more individualistic view of maximising rewards, without explicitly addressing how feelings of being over-rewarded may impact behaviour. Therefore, equity theory compliments social exchange theory in the context of this thesis, with both theories being relevant to understanding organisational dynamics, employee behaviours, and experience of the customer.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This Chapter delves into the methodological part of this thesis. First, pragmatism is discussed as a philosophical viewpoint that underpins this research, as well as its implication on the epistemological, ontological, and axiological levels. Next, the research design is outlined and the methodology for the empirical studies – Fuzzy-set Quantitative Analysis (fsQCA) – is discussed in detail. Once the research design is explained, various existing concept measurements for IMO, COSE, and CX are assessed. Based on the literature review and relevance to this research, Chapter 4 examines and justifies the choice of measurement scales for each of the concepts.

4.1. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Researcher's philosophical ideas influence how the research is carried out, including the formulation of research questions and objectives, research design and interpretation of findings (Creswell, 2014). The philosophical assumptions that guide the research are referred to as paradigms in social research (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Research paradigms clarify the assumptions that the researcher brings to their work, guide the selection of appropriate research methods and provide context for interpretation of the results (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The authors identify three main ways of interpreting these paradigms: epistemology, ontology and axiology. Epistemology addresses what constitutes acceptable knowledge, ontology explores the nature of reality, and axiology examines the role of values in research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Given the importance of these three perspectives, stating the philosophical paradigm is essential for ensuring transparency and helping readers understand and accurately interpret the findings.

The primary philosophical paradigms in research include positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and pragmatism. Positivism asserts that reality is objective, and knowledge is derived from empirical evidence (Comte and Bridges, 2015). This paradigm involves the use of quantitative and scientific methods, such as statistical analysis and experiments. In contrast to positivism, interpretivism emphasises understanding the subjective experiences of the individuals, highlighting the importance of cultural, historical, and social factors that shape experiences (Weber, 2004). Due to this, interpretivism often involves qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or ethnography. Constructivism focuses on how individuals create knowledge, rather than understanding its underlying meanings (Osborne, 1996). This paradigm also typically employs qualitative research methods. Another common research paradigm is pragmatism. Pragmatism focuses on practical outcomes and real-word applications, acknowledging that knowledge cannot be fully separated from individual's beliefs (Howe, 1988). This paradigm supports the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as mixed methods design.

Pragmatism guides this research as it acknowledges the importance of quantitative findings, while recognising that individual experiences and perceptions influence the studied concepts. This allows for investigation of how measurable factors interact with subjective human experiences, helping the understanding of the relationship between IMO, COSE, and CX. Moreover, this paradigm's focus on practical implications and real-world applications encourages a more holistic understanding of these concepts. Positivism, interpretivism, and constructivism have limited applications for this research. Positivism focuses on observable and measurable facts, which reduces its suitability for investigating the nuanced relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX, which involve individual's behaviours and perceptions. On the other hand, interpretivism and constructivism prioritise subjective experiences and creation of meanings, making these paradigms less suited for exploring the causal links that this thesis aims to investigate. Pragmatic paradigm underpins this research and is discussed in detail below.

4.2. THE PRAGMATIC PARADIGM

Pragmatism emerged in the late 19th century and is largely attributed to the work of John Dewey, William James, and Charles Peirce (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). This philosophical approach shifts the focus from determining the nature of reality and truth to finding the most effective way to address a problem (Morgan, 2014). The author posits that under the pragmatic paradigm, actions are connected to the specific situations in which they happen, highlighting that human experiences are unique rather than universal. These actions lead to consequences that can change over time, reflecting the flexible nature of human behaviour (Morgan, 2014). This view highlights the role of context in how actions shape experiences. Therefore, according to pragmatic paradigm, reality is unlikely to be set once and for all and can be subject to change (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Because of this, multiple research methods can be beneficial for gaining the desired results, depending on the context (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008). Pragmatism offers researchers the flexibility to use diverse range of methods, while recognising that the choice of method should align with the research questions and context (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019).

Epistemologically, pragmatists believe that research should prioritise developing practical understanding of real-world issues, rather than engaging in metaphysical debates (Hothersall, 2019; Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). Pragmatism highlights the nature of experience, recognising that there always exists a level of interpretation in regards with human experience (Dewey, 1938; Morgan, 2014). Therefore, pragmatists argue that knowledge cannot be entirely separated from experiences and beliefs that shape it (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). According to this paradigm, all knowledge is rooted in experience, and while each person's knowledge is shaped by their unique experiences, much of this knowledge is also shared through social interactions (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Therefore, all knowledge is inherently social (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism does not treat knowledge as objective reality, instead, it views it as a tool to navigate and engage with the world (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Thus, the goal of research within the pragmatist paradigm is not to seek absolute truth but to understand and address the issues in a practical way, providing actionable solutions (Hothersall, 2019).

A pragmatic ontology acknowledges that multiple realities can exist because it is rooted in the idea that reality is shaped by different experiences, contexts and perspectives (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). In other words, reality does not necessarily exist independently from the mind, and different situations may lead to different understandings of reality. Pragmatism therefore takes a stance that a researcher does not need to choose between strictly objective and subjective positions, rather, it is possible to work with both views (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Pragmatic ontology represents a view of reality that is practical and fluid and determined by the context of research thus allowing to integrate multiple philosophical perspectives. This paradigm is not focusing on the debates around the nature of reality, completely shifting away from abstract philosophical debates. In fact, pragmatism values the different philosophical approaches that can be selected depending on the research needs, rather than engaging in debates over which approach is universally correct (Morgan, 2014).

Pragmatic axiology states that values are context-dependent and flexible, rather than absolute, meaning they can shift as culture evolves (Beatty, Leigh and Dean, 2009). Pragmatists emphasise that values and beliefs are dynamic and can change through conscious action and reflection (Morgan, 2014). This philosophical stance judges value of an idea, opinion, or belief based on how useful or effective it is in achieving the desired outcome (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). These authors argue that pragmatism is valuable for studying organisational processes because it treats people's ideas and beliefs as practical tools for solving problems and encourages their participation.

Pragmatists argue that knowledge and reality are not separate from beliefs and values upon which they are based (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). In other words, our underlying values and beliefs inevitably influence what we consider to be true or real. This aspect of pragmatism therefore highlights the importance of reflexivity in research, encouraging researchers to be aware of their own position and to continuously reflect on and potentially revise their beliefs in response to new insights.

Pragmatism is therefore a flexible paradigm, characterised by the idea that researchers should use the philosophical or methodological approach that works best for the research question, thus the research question defines the approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Pragmatists view reality as dynamic, not adhering to a single fixed reality or method of inquiry. This flexibility allows for a range of methods such as quantitative, qualitative or mixed, which can be applicable depending on the topic of research, which is one of the strengths of this paradigm. Pragmatic worldview promotes an integrative approach, valuing both subjective experience and objective evidence. This approach asserts that truth and value lie in the practical consequences of research and its ability to solve real-world issues. Pragmatism informed the examination of the concepts in this research as it emphasises the goal of practical insights aimed at achieving desirable outcomes such as COSE and CX. This paradigm allows for identifying actionable strategies that organisations can implement to enhance employee behaviour and customer outcomes. It prioritises the balance between theory and practice, helping to understand the relationships between concepts in a more nuanced way.

4.2.1 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodological decisions for the following empirical investigation were informed by the pragmatic paradigm. This thesis aims to understand the mechanism of how organisational practices are connected to experience of the customer in practice. Managers tend to take a practical approach when addressing CX since they are often focused on tangible outcomes and practical solutions to improve their business performance (Klaus, Edwardsson and Maklan, 2012). Pragmatic paradigm emphasises actionable knowledge that can be used to solve problems, which resonates with how managers approach their business operations. By adopting this philosophy, this research aims to produce insights that are theoretically sound but also practically relevant to managers who aim to enhance their employees' attitudes and experience for the customer.

From the perspective of pragmatic worldview, fuzzy set qualitive comparative analysis (fsQCA) is a suitable methodological approach to assess the causal links between the concepts in this study. It aligns with the practical, experience-based nature of knowledge generation that is emphasised in the chosen philosophical approach. FsQCA provides actionable insights by identifying multiple combinations of factors that lead to the desired outcome. The fsQCA method is discussed further and in detail in the next section.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research explores the interconnections between IMO, COSE and CX through a conceptual framework that integrates both organisational and customer perspectives. In the scope of this thesis, the aim is to empirically assess the connection of IMO and COSE in Study 1, followed by an analysis of connection between COSE and CX in Study 2. Informed by the pragmatic paradigm, these studies intend to understand the causal links between these concepts and offer practical insights into how firms can foster COSE and improve CX. To achieve these objectives, fuzzy set qualitive comparative analysis (fsQCA) was chosen for the empirical investigation, which will be discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 FUZZY-SET QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (FSQCA)

Fuzzy set qualitive comparative analysis (fsQCA) was employed to assess the causal connections between IMO, CX, and COSE (Ragin, 2008a).

FsQCA is a relatively recent extension of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a research approach introduced by Ragin (1987). The QCA is a case-based research method that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques to identify the configurations that can lead to a desired outcome (Marx, Rihoux and Ragin, 2014). This method gained popularity in political science and sociology for its ability to consider individual cases, as well as comparing multiple cases and generalising across them. However, originally, QCA used binary crisp sets that categorised variables into either fully present (1) or fully absent (0) from a membership. While such method offered simplicity and transparency, it faced criticism regarding its applicability to real-life scenarios (Marx, Rihoux and Ragin, 2014). To address these limitations, Ragin (2008a) applied fuzzy sets to QCA, resulting in the development of the fsQCA method. FsQCA has been rapidly gaining popularity in social sciences where it originated, as well as in other areas such as entrepreneurship and business (Kraus, Ribeiro-Soriano and Schüssler, 2018; Woodside 2011; Kallmuenzer et al., 2019; Abou-Foul, Ruiz-Alba and López-Tenorio, 2023). The main features of fsQCA are:

- Fuzzy sets
- Configurational approach
- Equifinality
- Causal complexity
- Truth tables
- Intermediate solutions

FUZZY SETS

Fuzzy set is an approach in mathematics where variables have a degree of membership in a set, rather than being in or out of it (Zadeh, 1965). In contrast to crisp sets, fuzzy sets allow for partial membership, meaning that variables can belong to a set to a certain degree ranging from 0.0 to 1.0 with a 0.5 crossover point (Ragin, 2000). Intermediate membership offers a more nuanced approach compared to a simple binary classification, enabling researchers to handle uncertainty and capture the nuanced complexity of relationships and reflect real-life scenarios (Kraus, Ribeiro-Soriano and Schüssler, 2018).

CONFIGURATIONAL APPROACH

Rather than examining the net effect of individual variables, fsQCA analyses how different combinations of conditions can affect the outcome (Ragin, 2008a). This method is therefore useful when analysing intricacies in relationships between concepts because it provides a holistic approach to studying complex phenomena (Pappas, 2018).

EQUIFINALITY

As mentioned above, fsQCA can analyse how the combinations of variables affect the outcome (Ragin, 2008a). An important characteristic of using this method is equifinality – a principle that multiple combinations of variables (pathways) can lead to the same outcome (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). The idea of equifinality therefore recognises multiple ways to achieve the same desired outcome, making it a beneficial method for obtaining realistic results. The idea of equifinality resonates with pragmatism's recognition that reality is complex and dependant on multiple conditions.

CAUSAL COMPLEXITY

FsQCA is favoured by some researchers because of its suitability for addressing causal complexity in a way that most conventional methods cannot (Kraus, Ribeiro-Soriano and Schüssler, 2018). Traditional methods often assume that the relationships between concepts is linear, or symmetrical, meaning that presence of a cause will lead to a certain effect, while absence of that cause will lead to the absence of the effect. Complex relationships are in most cases non-linear, and a presence or absence of a cause do not necessarily mirror each other in effects (Woodside, 2013). FsQCA can address asymmetric relationships by separately analysing which conditions lead to a presence of an outcome and which lead to its absence.

Additionally, fsQCA can distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions. A condition is necessary if the outcome cannot be achieved without its presence, however, its presence alone does not guarantee the outcome (Fiss, 2007). That means that every case where the outcome is achieved will have the necessary condition present. For example, studying is necessary to passing an exam, as one is unlikely to pass without studying. However, studying alone does not guarantee a pass since there could be other conditions affecting the outcome.

On the other hand, a sufficient condition is a condition or a combination of conditions that guarantees the outcome but may not be necessarily the only way to achieve it (Fiss, 2007). In other words, whenever the sufficient condition is present, the outcome will be achieved, although it may also be achieved via different pathways that may not include this condition. For example, answering all exam questions correctly does guarantee a pass. If that condition is satisfied, a pass is granted even is some other conditions such as 'sleep well before exam', 'work hard' are not. However, a student may still pass even if they make mistakes in some questions. Within sufficient configuration, some conditions can be core or peripheral, with core conditions being essential for the outcome, while peripheral being helpful, but not crucial (Fiss, 2011). A comprehensive summary of different types of causal conditions in fsQCA is presented in Table 13.

Table 13. Types of conditions in fsQCA analysis (own elaboration)

Aspect	Necessary conditions	Sufficient conditions	Core conditions	Peripheral conditions
Definition	A condition or their combination that must be present for the outcome to occur, but alone does not guarantee it	A condition or their configuration that guarantees the outcome	Condition that is central to sufficient configurations	Part of sufficient configurations that enhances the core conditions, but are not essential
Role in the outcome	Without it the outcome cannot occur	Ensures the outcome when present, but can be one of many ways to achieve it	Key factor driving the outcome within the sufficient configurations	Supportive factors that enhance the effect of core conditions on the outcome

Such approach allows researchers to understand how factors affect the dependent variable in a more in-depth and detailed manner, giving fsQCA advantage over traditional methods such as regression analysis. Overall, fsQCA allows for a more accurate representation of nuanced real-life relationships between concepts (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). In alignment with the pragmatic view, this method does not prescribe 'one-fits-all' solutions, recognising the complexity and diversity of service settings, offering practical insights that managers can apply in different contexts.

4.3.2 APPLYING FSQCA TO THIS RESEARCH

For the reasons described above, fsQCA is gaining popularity in social sciences as well as other fields. Moreover, this method can capture high-complexity cases using small samples, making it useful for studies where collecting large amounts of data is challenging (Ragin, 2008a). The strengths of fsQCA make it particularly suitable for examining the causal links between IMO, COSE and CX. FsQCA can aid this research in addressing the causal complexity that exists in the relationship between these concepts. Additionally, fsQCA can handle multiple causal conditions which is particularly useful when all the concepts in the study consist of multiple dimensions.

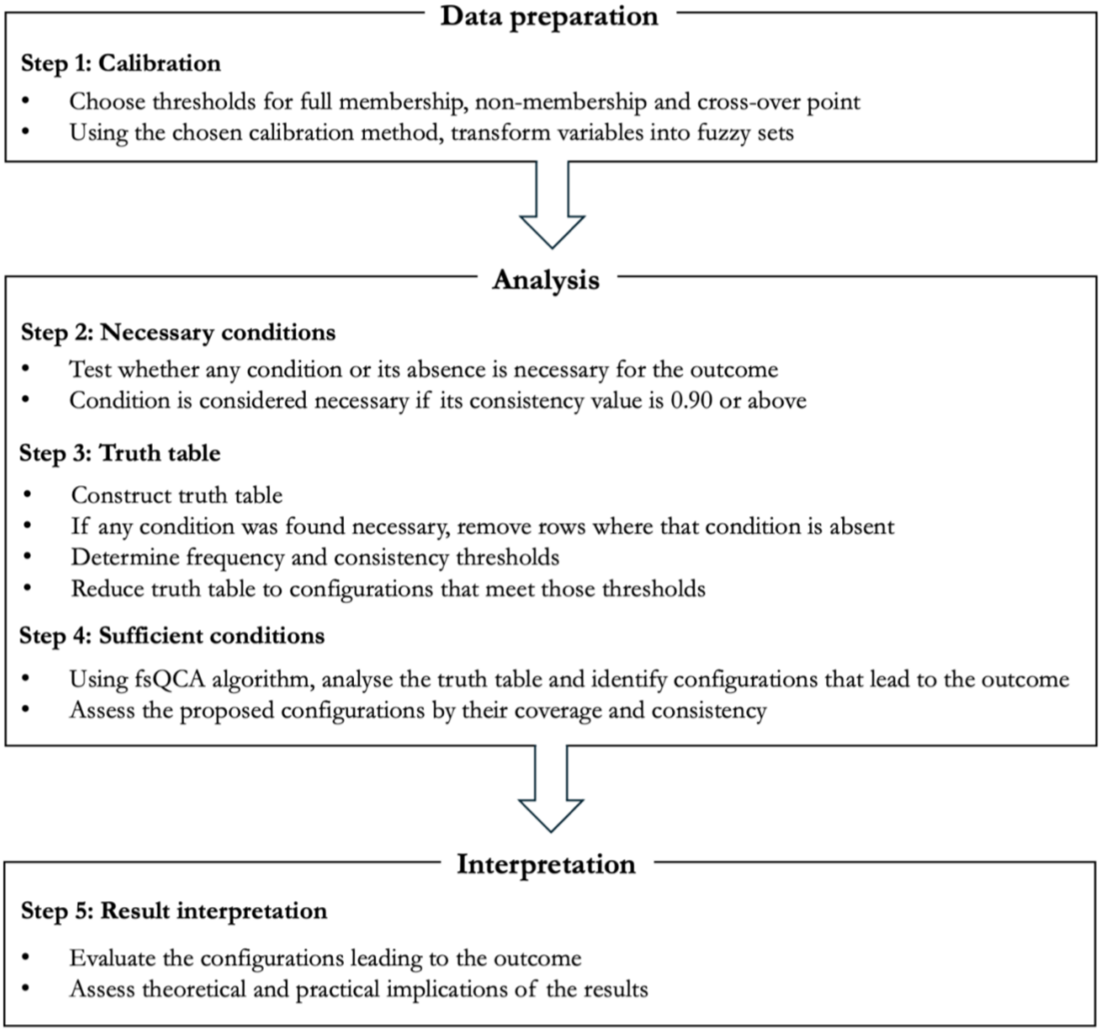
This method could also address non-linearity in the relationships between these concepts. For example, it can identify how different combinations of IMO dimensions can affect COSE, acknowledging that an effect of one dimension may depend on the presence or absence of another. The features of fsQCA such as ability to deal with asymmetry and causal complexity, as well as configurational approach, make it a suitable tool to assess antecedent relationships that will be explored in this thesis. Therefore, fsQCA is a suitable method for examining complex multidimensional concepts like the ones in this research (Pekovic and Rolland, 2020).

Additionally, the configurational approach that offers multiple pathways to achieve the same outcome could be particularly valuable for practitioners. Companies operate with limited resources and must therefore allocate them efficiently. Having a choice of different combinations that lead to the same desired outcome can help managers choose the best pathway that fits the current resources.

4.3.3 FSQCA PROCEDURE

Performing data analysis using fsQCA usually involves multiple stages: variable calibration, identification of necessary conditions, truth table, identification of sufficient conditions, and result interpretation (Ragin, 2008b). The fsQCA (version 4.1) software package was used to conduct the analysis (Ragin and Davey, 2023). A comprehensive summary of fsQCA process is shown below (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The steps of fsQCA analysis (own elaboration)



Earlier the following propositions were made based on literature review:

RP1: IMO has a direct positive influence on CX

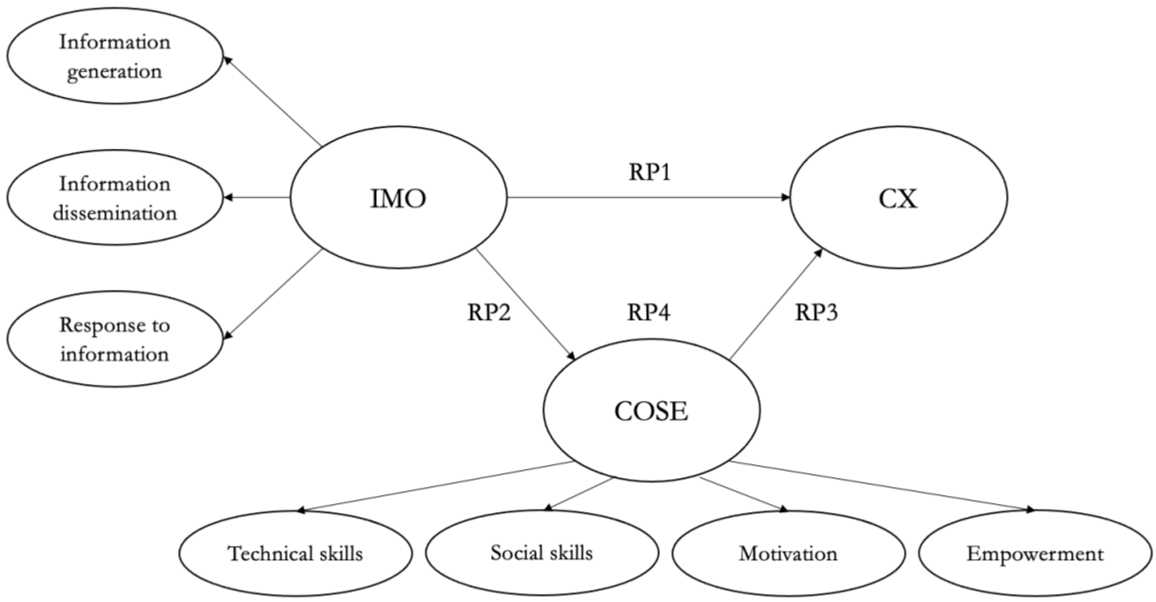
RP2: IMO has a direct positive influence on COSE

RP3: COSE has a direct positive influence on CX

RP4: COSE mediates the relationship between IMO and CX

These research propositions resulted in the development of the conceptual framework that was proposed earlier in this thesis. Based on the rigorous literature review, the framework outlines the connections between the concepts of IMO, COSE and CX (Figure 2).

Figure 3 (repeated). Proposed conceptual framework (own elaboration).



This thesis aimed to enhance the understanding of the connections between IMO and COSE, as well as COSE and CX. To achieve this, two studies will be conducted. Study 1 will investigate how various combinations of IMO dimensions contribute to COSE, while Study 2 will analyse how the dimensions of COSE influence CX. These studies will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, where new research models and propositions will be introduced in relation to the aim and focus of the studies.

4.4. CONCEPT MEASUREMENT

4.4.1 INTERNAL MARKET ORIENTATION MEASUREMENT

In the field of IMO, various authors have proposed adaptations with slight difference in the scales. In this section, the existing IMO scales are discussed and analysed. The scales and their dimensions are summarised in Table 14.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Lings (2004) proposed three IMO dimensions – information generation, information dissemination, and responsiveness to the information. Based on this work Lings and Greenley (2005) have developed the first IMO scale. The scale measured IMO on the three aforementioned dimensions and their subdimensions. In their scale, Lings and Greenley (2005) broke down information generation into three subdimensions – informal, formal face-to-face, and formal written information generation. The resulting scale comprised of 16 items capturing the essence of IMO elements.

Table 14. Existing IMO scales (own elaboration)

Lings and Greenley (2005)	Gounaris (2006)	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Information generation: 1. Informal 2. Formal face-to-face 3. Formal written Information dissemination Responsiveness	Intelligence generation: 1. Identification of exchanges of value 2. Aware of labour market conditions 3. Internal market segmentation 4. Internal segments targeting Intelligence dissemination: 1. Communication between managers and employees 2. Communication among managers Response to intelligence: 1. Job description 2. Remuneration system 3. Management concern 4. Training	Intelligence generation: 1. Identify value exchange 2. Internal market segmentation Internal communication Response to intelligence: 1. Management concern 2. Training 3. Work/family balance

Gounaris (2006) have proposed a similar IMO conceptualisation, separating three dimensions: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and response to intelligence. They took a more detailed approach to designing the scale, breaking down each of the dimensions into subdimensions. Intelligence generation consists of identification of exchanges of value, aware of labour conditions, internal market segmentation and internal segments targeting. Exchanges of value refers to finding the balance between what employee brings to the firm (effort, time, knowledge) and what the firm gives back in response. Market awareness has to do with the company's ability to stay informed about the external business environment, market trends, and customer preferences. Internal market segmentation and targeting is concerned with identifying employees with similar characteristics and needs and directing relevant information and training to these groups (Lings, 2004).

As for market intelligence dissemination, Gounaris (2006) has identified two subdimensions: communication between managers and employees and communication among managers. Response to intelligence includes job descriptions, remuneration systems, management concern and training. The resulting scale comprises of 42 items measuring IMO dimensions and subdimensions.

Ruizalba et al. (2014) draw upon the work of Lings and Greenley (2005) and Gounaris (2006) to develop an IMO scale for hospitality industry. They present a shorter 28-item questionnaire measuring intelligence generation, internal communication, and response to intelligence. The authors identify two subdimensions of intelligence generation: identify value exchange and internal market segmentation. As for response to intelligence, Ruizalba et al. (2014) define the following subdimensions: management concern, training, and work family balance.

The incorporation of work/family balance to the scale is a new and important addition to the IMO scale. The authors argue that employees have an increasing need to have a balance between their personal and work lives, thus this factor should not be overlooked in the context of IMO. Ruizalba et al. (2014) argue that an appropriate level of work family balance leads to higher employee satisfaction and lower intention to quit. In their study, the authors have confirmed the validity of work/family balance being a subdimension of response to intelligence and call for more studying exploring this concept as part of IMO.

The context of this thesis is hospitality industry, where balancing work and family life is of great importance. In an industry known for its demanding schedules, irregular hours, long shifts, and high-pressure environments, employees who can maintain a healthy work family balance have a higher chance to be more satisfied, motivated, and productive. This balance not only enhances the well-being of service employees but can also positively impact the quality of service they provide, which in turn can contribute to a better CX. Based on this reasoning, the scale proposed by Ruizalba (2014) is most relevant for this thesis. The full list of the questionnaire items can be seen in Appendix 1.

4.4.2 COSE MEASUREMENT

As literature review has demonstrated, the conceptualisation of COSE by Hennig-Thurau (2004) is a relatively understudied construct. All the identified quantitative studies regarding this concept employed the scale proposed by Hennig-Thurau (2004). The author identifies the following COSE dimensions: motivation, skills, and decision-making authority needed to fulfil customer needs. Motivation relates to the employee's emotional attitudes to behaving in a customer-oriented way, their perceived ability to do so, and the outcome expectations of such behaviours. Social skills refer to employee's ability to emphasise with the customer, and technical skills are the knowledge and technological acumen needed to respond to customer needs. Decision-making authority relates to employee empowerment and their perception of control in making on-the-spot decisions to serve the customer or to correct mishaps.

The scale developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) includes 12 survey items, three items per each of the COSE dimensions identified above. The original scale was designed to be disseminated to the employees. Hennig-Thurau (2004) suggests that the scale was originally intended to be answered by employees, as they would have valuable insights into the dimensions of COSE, specifically, the decision-making authority. The author posits that employees may be more aware of the internal company policies and hierarchy than customers, thus having first-hand experience regarding decision-making freedom they possess. On the other hand, asking employees to self-assess their own level of customer orientation may yield somewhat biased results, as they would avoid reflecting poorly on themselves. This is known as social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985). To mitigate this, the original scale can be adapted for dissemination to the customers. Customers may be more objective when evaluating COSE, as they are less likely to feel the pressure of reflecting negatively on the employee behaviours than the employees themselves. Therefore, administering the survey to customers may yield objective insights into employee behaviours.

It is therefore possible to administer the COSE scale to either employees or customers. Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, asking customers to evaluate customer orientation of employees may yield fairly objective results, unaffected by social desirability bias. However, employees may have more accurate insights into company operations to judge all aspects of COSE, such as motivation and authority (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003).

There exist other alternative scales that have been used to measure a related concept, customer orientation. While this concept is similar to COSE, research papers on customer orientation have not identified or quantified the same dimensions. Dean (2007) has proposed a scale that separates customer focus and customer feedback dimensions of customer orientation. The author has designed the questionnaire for dissemination to the customers. Another scale proposed by Coelho (2010) takes a simpler approach and measures the concept by asking employees to self-asses their levels of customer orientation. However, the author does not identify specific themes in the questionnaire and treats the customer orientation concept as unidimensional. Donavan (2004) has also developed a questionnaire to be administered to the employees and identified four dimensions of customer orientation: need to pamper, need to read customer needs, need to deliver, and need for personal relationship dimension. Nevertheless, these scales lack the specific dimensions that are necessary for accurately assessing COSE, such as skills, motivation and decision-making authority. Therefore, these scales are not suitable for addressing the aims of this research.

The scale developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) is therefore most relevant for the agenda outline in this thesis. The dimensions in this scale reflect COSE accurately and fit the aim of examining its relationship with IMO and CX. In literature review, it was demonstrated that there exist links between IMO and CX with the specific COSE dimensions – skills, motivation, and authority. Since the aim of this thesis is to study the relationships between these concepts, the scale developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) would provide the most accurate insights into the relationship between IMO and COSE, as well as COSE and CX. Therefore, this scale will be adopted for the empirical studies in Chapter 5 and 6. For the purpose of Study 1, the scale was reworded with minimal changes to be distributed to the employees. For Study 2, COSE questionnaire was administered to the customers and therefore no changes were necessary. Appendix 2 outlines the survey items that were used in the studies.

4.4.3 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MEASUREMENT

The literature review of CX measurement was conducted in order to find an appropriate way to empirically assess the relationship between IMO, COSE and CX. The concept of CX has been addressed from a variety of angles, which has greatly contributed to the knowledge about the subject. Nevertheless, there is still no consensus on measuring the concept (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, measuring CX in this thesis poses challenges. To ensure appropriate measurement method is selected, the analysis of the existing measurement scales is conducted, followed by a choice of the scale that aligns best with the objectives of this research.

Table 15 below presents several existing CX scales that have been used in academic research. These scales have been chosen based on a few factors. Firstly, this research recognises the complexity of CX, therefore scales that capture the multidimensionality of this concept are most appropriate. Hence, unidimensional scales that measure CX using one item (e.g. ‘Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with X’) are not included in the discussion. Secondly, to ensure reliability of the scales, only the scales published in peer reviewed journals rated from two and four stars were considered.

Table 15. Existing CX scales in literature (source: own elaboration)

Author	Dimensions	Citations
Brakus, Schmitt and Zaratonello (2009)	Sensory dimension	6403
	Affective dimension	
	Behavioural dimension	
	Intellectual dimension	
Chang and Horng (2010)	Physical surroundings	387
	Service provider	
	Other customers	
	Customers' companions	
	Customers themselves	
Bagdare and Jain (2012)	Joy	331
	Mood	
	Leisure	
	Distinctive	
Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007)	Education experience	2386
	Entertainment Experience	
	Esthetics Experience	
	Escapism Experience	
Maklan and Klaus (2011) Klaus and Maklan (2012) Klaus and Maklan (2013) Deshwal (2016)	Peace-of-mind	2020 (516/547/869/88)
	Moments-of-truth	
	Outcome focus	
	Product experience	
Froehle and Roth (2004)	Information richness belief	633
	Learning belief	
	Usefulness belief	

	Duration appropriateness belief	
	Intimacy appropriateness belief	
	Attitude towards the contact medium	
	Attitude towards the contact episode	
	Attitude towards the service provider	
Rose et al. (2012)	Skill	1393
	Challenge	
	Telepresence	
	Interactive	
	Connectedness	
	Customization	
	Control	
	Ease-of-use	
	Aesthetic	
	Beneficial	
	Cognitive experiential	
	Affective	
Verleye (2015)	Hedonic	440
	Cognitive	
	Social	
	Personal	
	Pragmatic	
	Economic	
Kuppelwieser and Klaus (2021)	Brand experience	118
	Service provider experience	
	Post-purchase experience	
Gahler, Klein and Paul (2022)	Affective	8
	Cognitive	
	Physical	
	Relational	
	Sensorial	
	Symbolic	

Although there is still no consensus among the authors about how to measure CX, multiple ways on approaching the issue have been proposed. This results in high variability of scales that are based on different dimensions (outlined in Table 9) and designed for use in a variety of contexts. Analysis of the most cited scales was conducted to identify one that would be the most suitable for this research. Developing a brand-new scale for measuring CX was not the aim of this paper, therefore the goal was set to adopt and adjust one of the existing measurements that has already been tested for validity and generalisability. For the next step, each of the aforementioned scales will be discussed below based on their relevance for the purpose of this research and the context of hospitality.

The most cited paper that attempts to measure experience, by Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009), approaches the concept from the perspective of brands. The authors measure experience based on widely accepted dimensions: sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual. The authors define brand experience as 'subjective, internal responses and behavioural responses' triggered by brand-related stimuli such as packaging, environment, design, etc. Some of brand stimuli could be related to the service employees. For example, in concept restaurants where waiting staff wears themed outfits and their communication with visitors is part of the storytelling. Another example is where service employees have specific training on how to treat clients according to the brand image, such as the famous UK restaurant called Karen's Diner where waiters are instructed to be rude to customers, making it a comical experience for visitors. Nevertheless, this scale is mostly focused on other brand attributes like the atmospherics, interior design, brand logo and communications. A company has more control over these elements compared to service employees. Since this research emphasises the role of employees in enhancing experience, this scale will not be considered.

The second most cited scale was proposed by Rose et al. (2012). The authors developed and empirically tested a model for measuring CX in online retailing. Despite its popularity, this scale is not relevant for this research due to the different nature of online and offline experience, as well as the different aspects of hospitality and retail. Similarly, the scale proposed by Froehle and Roth (2004) was excluded as it was designed to quantify CX in the tech-mediated context, which is not applicable to this research context.

Another highly adopted questionnaire in the hospitality sector was developed by Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007). This scale is based on the experience realms termed by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

The four dimensions are education, aesthetics, escapism and entertainment. The scale was created primarily for tourism industry, measuring these dimensions in the context of a hotel stay. The aesthetics and escapism dimensions are often reflected in the decorations and the general atmosphere that are mostly controlled by the company rather than service employees. Education and entertainment aspects of the questionnaire, however, can be related to and carried out by the service employees. Nevertheless, the questions related to these dimensions are not generally relevant to customer's experience in coffee shops.

One of the most widely cited scales that could be adapted for this research was proposed by Klaus and Maklan in 2011. The authors identified four dimensions of CX and proposed a scale to measure Customer Experience Quality (EXQ). Klaus and Maklan (2011) propose the following dimensions of CX: peace-of-mind, moments-of-truth, product experience and outcome experience. According to the authors, peace-of-mind refers to the emotions experienced by the customer during or after the service. Interactions with service employees can instil a sense of ease and confidence in the customer, whether it's about the employee's expertise or customer's choices. Moments-of-truth dimension relates to the service recovery and company's flexibility in unpredicted situations (Klaus and Maklan, 2011). Service employee's social skills play a significant role when something goes wrong – an employee with great social skills can turn what could be an unpleasant experience into a positive outcome. Researchers have found that customers that have experienced positive emotions following service recovery have increased feeling of justice, which results in higher loyalty to the brand (DeWitt, Nguyen and Marshall, 2008). Product experience dimension is associated with the perception of having options to compare and choose from. Outcome focus refers to the reduction of customer's transaction costs such as looking for options provided by other companies as well as customer's own goals in relation to the product or service (Maklan and Klaus, 2011).

Klaus and Maklan (2011) have developed and empirically tested the EXQ questionnaire based on these dimensions, establishing the validity and reliability of the scale, in the context of UK banking industry. Later in 2011, they conducted a study with UK mortgage customers and found that all dimensions have a positive effect on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth (Maklan and Klaus, 2011). Out of all the dimensions, peace-of-mind and moments-of-truth were found to have the strongest effect on the outcome variables. The authors have used the questionnaire again in their subsequent research in 2013, addressing the issue of generalisability of the scale. Klaus and Maklan (2013) conducted a study across four different service contexts: mortgage customers, fuel and service station customers, retail banking customers, and luxury goods customers. This study supported the authors' previous findings, confirming that all identified dimensions of CX had a direct positive effect on customers' behavioural outcomes, which was true for all four service settings. Klaus and Maklan (2013) have thus proved the validity of EXQ scale in different industries.

The scale has also been used by other researchers in various contexts. While previous EXQ research was conducted in the context of UK, Deshwal (2016) has adapted the questionnaire for retail stores in India, thus taking a further step towards ensuring generalisability of the scale. Interestingly, the author has found that customers that reported higher levels of education and income place more importance on peace-of-mind than other dimensions. Roy (2018) contributed to the existing knowledge about CX and the generalisability of EXQ scale. The author compared the effects of experience in utilitarian and hedonic services. A sample of respondents identified restaurants as an industry where experiences matter the most. The authors have conducted a longitudinal study and found that repetitive positive experience led to increased loyalty and positive WOM. This is therefore an important implication for managers: ensuring a good experience can encourage customers to become regulars.

Kuppelwieser and Klaus (2021) later attempted to increase the generalisability of EXQ scale by restructuring it and testing its validity in B2B context. The updated scale consists of three dimensions: brand experience (pre-purchase stage), service provider experience (during purchase), and post-purchase experience. However, the new scale makes it difficult to separate the questions relating to service employees, one of the main elements of this thesis, as they appear across different sections of the questionnaire.

Verleye (2015) took a different approach and designed a scale to measure CX in co-creation contexts. According to Lusch and Vargo (2006), companies can engage customers in co-creation through value-in-use and co-production. Value-in-use refers to subjective value that a customer derives from using a product or service based on their unique needs, while co-production is active involvement of customers in the design and creation process (Im and Qu, 2017). For example, Subway co-created with their customers by providing an option to 'build your own sub' allowing customers to choose all the ingredients in their sandwich. Starbucks used to have a 'My Starbucks idea' campaign where customers could propose their ideas for new menu items. Examples of co-creation in restaurant industry can range from collecting customer feedback on food and drinks as well as encouraging customers to tag their establishment on social media to increase social media presence and volume of online content. Verleye (2015) created a scale based on hedonic, cognitive, social and pragmatic dimensions to measure CX during co-creation processes. While co-creation is a highly relevant topic in the hospitality industry, IMO and CX, the questions in the scale do not reflect the role of service employees in the processes.

Chang and Horng (2010) took a more social approach to measuring CX. The scale they have developed is based on dimensions of customer's companions, other customers present, physical surroundings, and service providers. The service provider section of the questionnaire included questions relating to personal interactions with service employees, which could therefore be relevant to this research. However, the questionnaire was created and validated in the context of customers having companions with them, assuming that experience depends on the interaction between them. As the authors state, it may not be applicable to the single visitors. This is important for coffee shop industry as many customers come there by themselves to work or to have a quick bite. Moreover, the research was conducted in Taiwan, therefore social implications could be different to using this questionnaire in UK.

Another scale that fit the initial search criteria was developed by Bagdare and Jain (2012). They based their scale on the following dimensions - joy, mood, leisure, and distinctiveness. Upon closer inspection, however, it was identified that the scale is tailored for shopping experience and has not established nomological or discriminant validity, which would make it difficult to tailor and adapt to the purpose of this research.

A recent paper by Gahler, Klein and Paul (2022) presented a different approach for measuring CX than the previously discussed papers. CX occurs at different stages of customer journey, across many channels. The authors therefore aimed to address the existing fragmentation in available CX scales and developed their own questionnaire that can be used consistently regardless of the experience context or channel. To achieve that, the authors conceptualise CX as a 'travelling construct' (Osigweh, 1989). A travelling concept is characterised by a few but distinguishing attributes that define its scope and its connotation, making it possible to apply the concept in the same way in a variety of contexts (Gahler, Klein and Paul, 2023). The authors identified the defining CX features as subjectivity, directedness, and multidimensionality. These features were reflected in the questionnaire that measures CX on the following dimensions: affective, cognitive, physical, relational, sensorial, and symbolic. The resulting scale was validated across different experience settings and can therefore be used to track CX in different channels. This scale was published in a highly rated Journal of Service Research, however, due to the relatively recent publishing date, it has not yet been used in other papers.

Several of the most established, multidimensional CX scales were examined. To make the final decision of which scale is most suitable for this research, the conceptual framework needs to be revisited. Earlier, this thesis proposed that IMO may mediate the relationship between CX and COSE, and COSE can have a direct effect on CX. In order to analyse the relationship between COSE and CX, the chosen CX scale needs to reflect the role of employees in enhancing experience.

The CX scale proposed by Klaus and Maklan (2013) is particularly well-suited for studying the relationships between the key concepts of this thesis, as it provides a relevant lens for assessing the role of employees in improving the experience of the customer. As established previously, IMO focuses on internal processes like employee satisfaction, communication, and empowerment. On the other hand, COSE emphasises skills, motivation, and decision-making authority. Both concepts influence how employees interact with customers, meaning that the CX measurement should align with that dynamic. The dimensions in the scale proposed by Klaus and Maklan (2013) reflect the importance of employee-customer interactions, service recovery, speed, and addressing customer's preferences. Specifically, peace-of-mind, moments-of-truth, and outcome focus are relevant. The survey items of these dimensions address service employees' expertise, social skills, empathy, service recovery and the general ability of employees to make the process smooth and easy (Appendix 3). This aligns with the focus of this thesis and the concepts studied, which is crucial for establishing valid causal links between IMO, COSE and CX. The last dimension in this scale, product experience, contains items that measure the quality of the product, choice availability, and offers. These elements are primarily managed by the company or brand, while service employees have little to no effect on them. Since the focus of this study is on the dimensions that are shaped by the employees, product experience items will be removed from the final list of selected questions. This ensures that the analysis remains aligned with the core research objectives.

Moreover, the EXQ scale has been validated across different industries and socio-economic contexts, demonstrating its versatility and applicability. The authors have tested the scale in diverse settings, including luxury retail, where the role of employees is crucial to the experience. Similarly, in the context of hospitality, the influence of employees on CX is equally important (Hartline et al., 2000; Shum, Gatling, and Shoemaker, 2018). This alignment reinforces the relevance of the EXQ scale for this research, as its design captures how employees can shape CX.

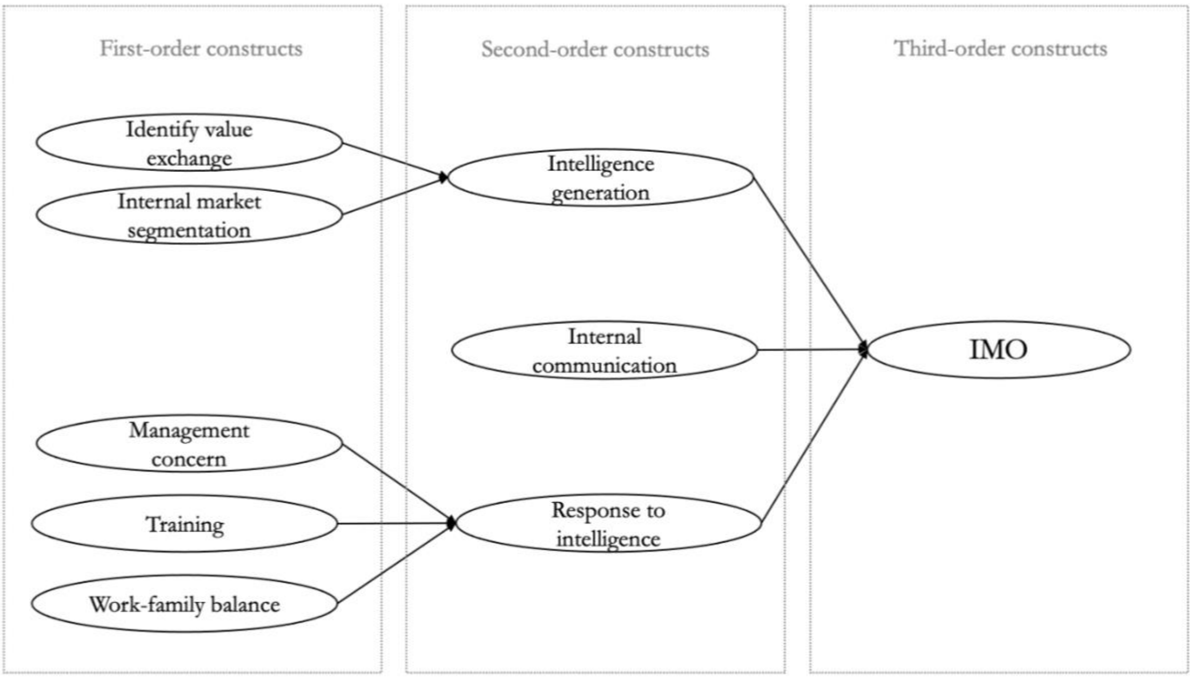
To fit with the research objectives of this thesis, the scale EXQ developed by Klaus and Maklan (2013) will be used. The survey items will be chosen from the following three dimensions: moments-of-truth, peace-of-mind, and outcome focus. Within this question set, seven questions that are relevant to this research were selected. One item represents the dimension of peace-of-mind, four items were chosen for moments-of-truth, and two items for outcome focus. The original questions have been reworded slightly to fit the context of coffee shop experience. More detailed breakdown and the list of sample questions can be seen in the Appendix 3.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY 1

5.1. OVERVIEW

The first Study aims to understand how various IMO elements contribute to a higher level of COSE. IMO is a third-order construct, meaning it has dimensions as well as sub-dimensions. IMO is a latent variable that can be observed by measuring these first- and second-order constructs. For this study, the IMO model proposed by Ruizalba et al. is adopted (2014) as discussed in the previous chapter. The structure of the IMO concept with its dimensions and sub-dimensions can be seen below (Figure 4).

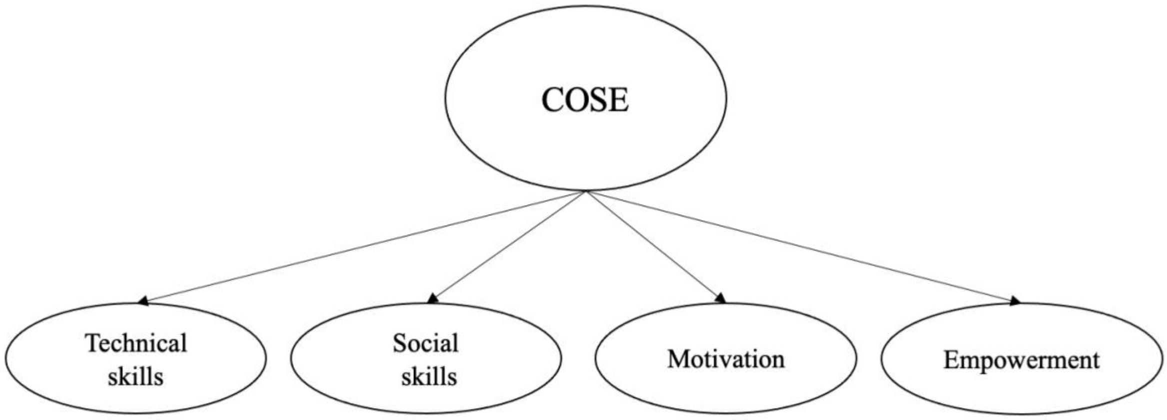
Figure 4. The structure of the IMO concept (adapted from Ruizalba et al., 2014)



According to the model proposed and empirically tested by Ruizalba et al. (2014), IMO consists of three dimensions: intelligence generation, internal communication, and response to intelligence. Intelligence generation consists of two sub-dimensions: identify value exchange and internal market segmentation. Identify value exchange refers to employees feeling that their values and contributions are recognised and reciprocated by the organisation (Gounaris, 2008). Internal market segmentation is the process of dividing employees into distinct groups based on specific characteristics or needs, to tailor internal communication, motivation, and development strategies effectively (Lings, 2004). Internal communication refers to the communication between employees and manages with the aim of sharing strategic objectives to employees, ensuring they are well informed and aligned with organisational goals (Ruizalba et al., 2014). In line with the adopted model, internal communication is not further divided into sub-dimensions. Lastly, response to intelligence consists of management concern, training, and work-family balance. Management concern refers to the extent to which the managers create a culture of support and friendliness at a workplace (Ruizalba et al., 2014).

As for COSE, the model developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) is adopted. In line with this model, COSE consists of four dimensions: technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority (Figure 5).

Figure 5. COSE model proposed by Hennig-Thurau (2004)



Technical skills and social skills refer to the abilities that are necessary for employees to deliver high-quality service. Motivation is the employee's internal drive to meet the needs of the customers. Decision-making authority is the level of autonomy and empowerment that employees possess to make on-the sot decisions regarding customer service (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). The purpose of Study 1 is to explore how various elements of IMO affect COSE.

5.2. RESEARCH MODEL

Before designing the research model for Study 1, the complexity associated with IMO being a latent variable had to be addressed. The three primary dimensions (intelligence generation, internal communication, and intelligence response) are broad and ambiguous, which makes it challenging to capture the nuanced effect of IMO on COSE. To have a more granular and detailed understanding of the mechanism of IMO's effect on COSE, the sub-dimensions of IMO could be analysed instead. However, introducing all six IMO sub-dimensions into the fsQCA can cause excessive complexity and reduce the model's robustness. Therefore, it was necessary to streamline the analysis to achieve clearer and more interpretable results.

To achieve that, certain sub-dimensions needed to be removed while ensuring that each main dimension of IMO was still adequately represented. This helped us enhance the robustness of the fsQCA results. A more interpretable set of data can make the relationships between IMO and COSE more understandable and actionable. Moreover, this approach allowed us to maintain the integrity of the IMO concept while simplifying the model. Literature review was conducted to choose which IMO sub-dimensions should be removed from the analysis.

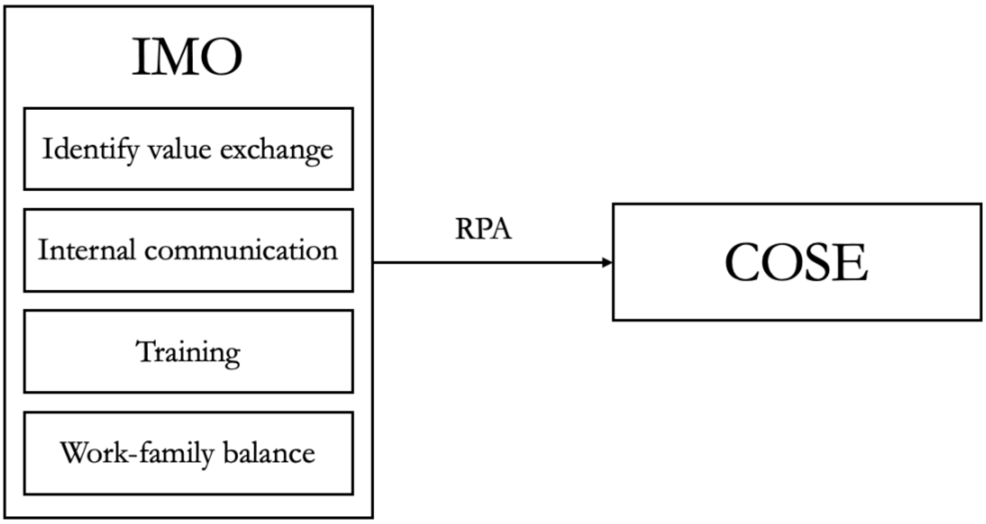
To maintain the integrity of the IMO concept, all dimensions needed to be represented by at least one sub-dimension. Internal communication does not have any sub-dimensions in the model adopted for this study, and therefore does not need to be reduced. Research have shown that the segmentation dimension of IMO is less correlated with the employee outcomes than identify value exchange (Ruizalba et al., 2014). As for the response to intelligence, the authors have found that management concern, training and work-family balance have roughly the same influence on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment. Remaining IMO studies only analysed the main IMO dimensions' effect on the outcome, without quantifying the effects of each sub-dimension. Therefore, to gain more insight into which IMO sub-dimensions may affect employees the most, interviews with academics and practitioners were conducted.

Semi-structured interviews with two academics and four cafe managers were also conducted to validate the choice of sub-dimensions. Identify value exchange (IVE) sub-dimension was agreed by academics to be crucial to be kept representing the information generation dimension of IMO. This is because this dimension is concerned with gathering employees' feedback and understanding their needs and concerns, which adequately captures the information generation dimension of IMO. It is reflected in questions such as: 'One of this company's priorities is to understand the needs of its employees before any decisions are made', or 'In this company we regularly conduct studies to identify our employees' needs and expectations'. Practitioners highlighted the need to understand their employees' needs, because if they are addressed, the employees will be able to provide their best service. One manager noted that she asks her employees about their personality traits and inquires on what they need to thrive at work. None of the practitioners that were interviewed placed much importance on segmentation of their staff. Since the research context for this study are small independent cafes, segmenting employees may be less of a priority given the relatively small staff number that these establishments usually have. Therefore, internal market segmentation is dropped from further analysis.

Most of the respondents have agreed that work-family balance is highly important for employee outcomes. The practitioners reported that work-family balance helps reduce stress and promote employee happiness. As one manager put it, 'happy employees are more likely to provide excellent service than tired, burned-out staff'. Almost all respondents agreed that training is crucial for customer orientation, as it ensures that staff have the necessary skills to perform their jobs well and therefore create positive experiences for the customer. Managers note that it only takes one cup of poorly made coffee to lose a potential loyal customer. While respondents admitted that management concern is still important for the desired employee behaviours, some have said that it acts as more of an enhancer, rather than the primary driver of customer-oriented behaviours. One manager said that they do their best to foster a culture of support, but it 'does not have such a direct effect on day-to-day employee behaviours as training and general satisfaction'. Another practitioner has agreed, stating that training and balance with personal life are the foundation, while management concern is 'more of a bonus'. While the interviewers note the importance of management concern in the context of customer orientation, most have agreed that training and work-family balance are fundamental for employees to display certain level of customer orientation. Based on these findings, the focus was narrowed down to the following IMO sub-dimensions: identify value exchange, internal communication, training, and work-family balance.

Through applying fsQCA, this study aims to examine the various pathways by which IMO and its sub-dimensions can contribute to enhancing COSE, resulting in the following research model (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Proposed research model for Study 1 (own elaboration)



Building on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3, and the literature review regarding the relationship between IMO and COSE, an empirical approach using fsQCA is now adopted. In this section of the thesis, a new set of propositions are put forward, aimed at a nuanced examination of causal configurations leading to enhanced COSE, starting with Research Proposition A:

> **Research Proposition A:** There exist necessary and sufficient IMO conditions, as well as specific pathways, that can enhance COSE.

5.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before collecting the data, ethical considerations were discussed. Firstly, the consent form and participant information sheet were written up. The consent form is a document designed obtain informed consent from the participants. By signing this form, respondents confirm that they are willing to participate in the study, acknowledge their right to withdraw at any time, and consent to the data to be used to research. Additionally, the form allows them to express interest in receiving information about the research and proved the option to contact the researcher if needed. The participant information sheet provides detailed information about the study. This included its objective to explore the influence of managerial approach on employees, what participation will involve, how the data will be used and handled. It also explains that their anonymity will be maintained.

Secondly, a list of indicative questions was drafted to outline the types of questions that will be asked of participants during the study. This list included sample questions about IMO and COSE designed to be disseminated to the coffee shops employees.

Lastly, the ethics form was completed in Virtual Research Environment (VRE) of the University of Westminster to determine the nature of research. The research design for Study 1 did not imply any harm or discomfort for the participants or the researcher and did not involve vulnerable participants. Therefore, this research was classified as Class 1 (research with no or minimal ethical implications) under the University of Westminster guidelines.

The consent form, participant information sheet, indicative questions and the ethics form were submitted to VRE. These documents can be seen in Appendix 4. As this research was classified as Class 1, it was signed off by the director of studies as not requiring approval in due time before the data collection was to start.

Nevertheless, every research has potential ethical risks that should be considered and addressed:

Informed consent. It is essential to ensure that respondents fully understood what participation entails. Apart from being given the consent form and participant information sheet, all participants were verbally informed about the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of participation.

Anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, no identifying information such as employee names or the names of the coffee shops they work for was collected. Instead, surveys were numbered to ensure the responses remained untraceable to specific people or coffee shops. This approached allowed us to gather the relevant insights from employees while maintaining confidentiality.

Data Protection. Data security protocols were also explained to the respondents in participant information sheet and the consent form. University of Westminster's OneDrive (which is compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018) was used to securely store the survey responses. The collected data was protected by user ID and a password, accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and not shared with any third parties.

Once the ethical considerations were addressed, surveys were created via Google forms and the data collection could be carried out.

5.4. SAMPLE

To analyse the relationship between IMO and COSE, research was conducted in coffee shops, specifically, in independent cafes in London. Purposive sampling approach was employed, guided by the pragmatic approach, to ensure that the participants bring useful practical insights to this research (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). Purposive sampling approach involves non-random selection of participants who are most relevant to the research topic and have therefore an important perspective on the topic (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014). Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that managers of independent cafes will have the most hands-on knowledge about cafe's practices and employee behaviours. Independent cafes across different neighbourhoods of London were chosen to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. The cafes that were selected for the study varied in price points and the general ambiance. This allowed the inclusion of cafes from different socio-economic settings, ranging from more upscale to more modest venues. The sampling technique was aimed to capture diverse environments to account for possible different demographics and management practices, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the causal link between IMO and COSE. The managers of 30 independent cafes in London were approached. The managers were approached directly in their cafes during business hours and were asked to fill out a questionnaire on the spot. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed using Google Forms.

The questionnaire was administered in person using an iPad to make it easier for the participants to respond immediately, therefore encouraging higher participation rates. The survey was disseminated to managers rather than cafe visitors because managers have a more detailed perspective on organisational strategies, internal marketing and communication, as well as their implementation. Additionally, managers can provide insight into how implementation of these factors impacts employee performance. Their input is therefore crucial in accurately capturing the IMO and COSE concepts. Managers were approached individually during their work hours and were asked to complete the questionnaire on the provided iPad. Participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses and that no personal identifying information was collected at any stage of the process. Collected responses in Google Forms were later aggregated and exported to Excel for data preparation. The responses from managers who spent less than six months at a current workplace, as well as single-choice response surveys, were excluded. Additionally, some managers refused to participate in the study. In the end, 17 usable questionaries were obtained.

5.5. DEMOGRAPHICS

Through data preparation, only key informants' responses were kept for further analysis. A key informant is an individual with expertise in a particular research topic, who can provide valuable insights through surveys or interviews (Marshall, 1996). The majority of the managers (65%) have

Table 16. Study 1 demographics (own elaboration)

Study 1 respondent's demographics	Number of respondents	%
Gender		
Female	9	53%
Male	8	47%
Other	0	0%
Age		
18 – 30	11	65%
31 – 40	4	24%
41 – 50	2	12%
51 +	0	0%
Education		
High school or less	1	6%
College or further education	4	24%
University undergraduate	9	53%
University postgraduate	3	18%
Doctorate	0	0%
Income		
< £10,000	1	6%
£10,001 – £20,000	4	24%
£20,001 –£40,000	9	53%
£40,001 – £60,000	3	18%
> £60,000	0	0%

been employed at the current cafe for over 1 year, while the rest of the respondents worked there for over six months. All the managers reported working in the coffee shops for longer than one year. Their long tenure at their current place of work as well as the coffee shops in general ensures that the respondents have enough experience to answer the questions in this study to their best knowledge. About 65% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30, and 53% of the respondents were female. Most of the respondents (53%) had a bachelor's degree. A considerable number of respondents attended college or higher education institution (24%) and about 18% of respondents had a master's degree. Over a half of respondents earned between £20,000 and £40,000 a year, which is in line with the average salary for cafe managers in London. A detailed summary of respondent's demographics is shown in Table 16.

5.6. MEASUREMENT

The full questionnaire comprised of 46 questions, including multiple-choice, 7-point Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The survey began by asking questions about the manager's tenure in the present cafe and coffee shops in general, followed by demographic questions about age, gender, education and income. Then, the survey included 22 questions addressing IMO and 12 questions about COSE. As the last question, managers were asked to assess their level of knowledge related to the questions asked in the survey. That question was placed in the end of the survey to prompt an honest evaluation of respondent's knowledge, allowing for assessment of response accuracy.

The items used to measure IMO and COSE were based on the established scales, with minor adaptations to fit the purpose of this study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the IMO questionnaire from Ruizalba et al. (2014) was adopted. The scale included 4 items for identify value exchange (IVE), 3 items for internal market segmentation (IMS), 4 items for internal communication (IC), 5 items for management concern (MC), 3 items for training (TR), and 3 items for work-family balance (WFB). To measure COSE, the scale developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) was adapted. The scale consists of 3 items for each of the dimensions: technical skills (TS), social skills (SS), motivation (M), and decision-making authority (DMA). These items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, anchored at 7 'strongly agree' and 1 'strongly disagree'.

5.7. AGGREGATE SCORE CALCULATION

Before calculating the aggregate scores, the validity of the insights had to be ensured by including only the responses of managers with sufficient experience to accurately evaluate the levels of IMO and COSE. Therefore, responses were excluded if the respondents were not deemed key informants. This determination was based on two criteria: the respondent's employment time and their self-reported knowledge on the topic. The responses of those who have worked in their current workplace for at least 6 months and reported their knowledge on the topic to be 'high' were kept, while 6 responses that did not fit the key informant criteria were removed. Additionally, responses containing identical answers to all questions and appearing to lack thoughtful consideration (straight-lining responses) were also removed. These exclusions ensure that the data reflects genuine insights from managers that have sufficient experience.

Both IMO and COSE elements in this study were measured by multiple items. Therefore, prior to calibrating the variables into fuzzy sets, aggregate scores for each variable need to be created. In

Study 1, identify value exchange and internal communication were each measured by 4 items, and training and work-family balance were each measured by 3 questions. Aggregate scores for IMO sub-dimensions were calculated by finding an average score of relevant items for each of the cases as recommended in literature (Basurto and Speer, 2012; Galeazzo and Furlan, 2018). An example below (Table 17) is showing the aggregate score calculation for identify value exchange variable. The same process was repeated for internal communication, training, and work-family balance.

Table 17. Aggregate score calculation for IVE

Case	Identify value exchange (IVE)	Item 1: One of this company's priorities is to understand the needs of its employees before any decisions are made.	Item 2: We make sure we meet our employees face to face to understand better their needs.	Item 3: In the company we regularly conduct studies to identify out employees' needs and expectations.	Item 4: An important aspect of our work is to check whether our employees are satisfied with their job and to identify any problems they might have.
1	**5.75**	7	6	4	6
2	**6.75**	7	6	7	7
3	**5.5**	5	6	5	6
4	**5**	5	6	5	4
5	**6**	4	7	6	7
6	**7**	7	7	7	7
7	**6**	7	7	5	5
8	**6.5**	6	7	7	6
9	**6.25**	7	7	4	7
10	**2**	2	2	2	2
11	**3**	4	3	2	3
12	**4.25**	4	6	3	4
13	**4.5**	6	6	2	4
14	**5.5**	7	5	3	7
15	**5.25**	6	5	3	7
16	**2.75**	3	2	1	5
17	**5**	4	6	3	7

As for COSE, each dimension (technical and social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority) was measured by 3 items. In fsQCA, the outcome variable needs to be a composite measure, rather than a multidimensional construct. Therefore, the aggregate scores were obtained by calculating the average of all items measuring COSE per respondent.

5.8. FSQCA ANALYSIS

5.8.1 CALIBRATION

As the first step to analysing data using fsQCA, the measurement scores need to be transformed into fuzzy sets ranging from 0 to 1, indicating membership belonging for each case (Ragin, 2008). The author suggests a direct method of calibration where original values are transformed into fuzzy values anchored at three breakpoints: full membership (0.95), intermediate value (0.5), and full non-membership (0.05). The exact values of 1.0 and 0.0 are not used as breakpoints as they would signify positive or negative infinity (Ragin, 2007). The direct calibration method is typically preferred as it makes the method more generalisable and reproducible in future studies (Pappas and Woodside, 2021).

The calibration method recommended by Wu et al. (2014) was adopted to choose the values of the original 7-point Likert scale to represent membership belonging thresholds. In line with their advice, the anchors were set as follows: 7 for full membership, 5 for a crossover point, and 3 for a full non-membership (Table 18).

Table 18. Membership threshold values for fuzzy sets (own elaboration)

Variable type	Name	Original Scale	Membership threshold values		
			Full non-membership (0.05)	Crossover point (0.5)	Full membership (0.95)
Outcome	COSE	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
Conditions	IVE	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	IC	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	TR	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	WFB	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)

For a full membership, a score of 7 was chosen. In the context of IMO and COSE, a score of 7 ('strongly agree) shows that the employee strongly perceives high levels of support and motivation, thus suggesting the full alignment with the desired IMO and COSE indicators.

In fuzzy sets, the crossover or intermediate point (0.5) indicates the maximum point of ambiguity (Ragin, 2007). Although in 7-point Likert scale the score '4' is labelled 'Neutral', for this study it may not truly represent ambiguity of the respondent. A midpoint in the survey can introduce the possibility of social desirability bias, meaning that a respondent with mild negative feelings may prefer to choose a safer, neutral response (Greenleaf, 1992). Additionally, some respondents tend to choose a midpoint when they did not fully understand the question, or due to response fatigue and undesirability to deeply consider a difficult question (Velez and Ashworth, 2007; O'Muircheartaigh, Krosnick and Helic, 2001). It has also been found that some respondents are inclined to select the midpoint option when it is available, while they would have expressed disagreement if the midpoint option was not provided. (O'Muircheartaigh, Krosnick and Helic, 2001; Weijters, Cabooter and Schillewaert, 2010). Therefore, the score '4' may not necessarily represent ambiguity despite being in the middle of the scale. On the other hand, in the context of IMO and COSE, respondents who choose 'slightly agree' (5) may recognise some positive aspects but are not fully convinced. Respondents might use 5 to express a safe middle ground when they have mixed feelings or are uncertain, indicating a state of ambiguity that is different from pure neutrality. 'Somewhat agree' can be seen as the minimum level of agreement indicating some recognition of the cafe's efforts in IMO and COSE, while still having mixed feelings. Therefore, 5 is a better indicator of ambiguity and crossing over from non-membership to partial membership in this study.

Lastly, in the context of this study, even a slight disagreement still implies a notable misalignment in respondent's perception of the concepts studied. Respondents who slightly disagree are likely experiencing unmet needs, lack of support and motivation, which signals potential negation (or absence) of IMO and COSE. Using 3 acknowledges that non-membership can range from slight to strong disagreement, rather than being limited to the most extreme negative responses.

Once the calibration method was chosen based on the work of Wu et al. (2014), the original values were transformed into fuzzy scores. In fsQCA (version 4.1) software, the calibrated variables were calculated using the 'compute' function. The resulting values were in a range between 0 and 1 and labelled Cal_IVE, Cal_IC, Cal_TR, Cal_WBF, and Cal_COSE. In fsQCA, cases that are exactly 0.5 represent the maximum ambiguity and are therefore automatically removed from analysis by the algorithm (Ragin, 2008a). To ensure no cases are dropped, Fiss (2011) recommends adding a constant of 0.001 to all values below 1 after the calibration. In Excel, an 0.001 was added to all calibrated conditions, which were then labelled Cal_IVE_2, Cal_IC_2, Cal_TR_2, Cal_WBF_2, and Cal_COSE_2 to easier distinguish the final values.

5.8.2 ANALYSIS OF NECESSARY CONDITIONS

The second step in fsQCA is analysis of necessary conditions. Necessary conditions are the ones that must be present for an outcome to occur, but alone do not guarantee it (Fiss, 2007). The conditions (identify value exchange, internal communication, training, or work-family balance) and their negation (absence) were examined to establish whether any of them are necessary to achieve COSE. A negation of a condition is indicated by '~' in fsQCA. Necessary condition analysis was performed in fsQCA software using 'Analyse > Necessary conditions' functions. The resulting values are presented below in Table 19.

Table 19. Analysis of necessary conditions (Study 1)

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
Identify value exchange (IVE)	0.76	0.77
~ Identify value exchange (~IVE)	0.53	0.67
Internal communication (IC)	0.89	0.73
~ Internal communication (~IC)	0.36	0.57
Training (TR)	0.75	0.72
~ Training (~TR)	0.48	0.61
Work-family balance (WFB)	0.86	0.76
~ Work-family balance (~WFB)	0.42	0.59

Notes: ~ indicates the absence of a condition

A condition is considered necessary if its consistency value is 0.9 or above (Ragin, 2008b). According to the fsQCA analysis, internal communication (Cal_IC_2) has the highest consistency value (0.89) of all conditions, which signifies its high importance for the outcome. Internal communication ensures the flow of information within the company, which includes fostering alignment of employees with company's strategic goals and values (Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021). Moreover, internal communication enables managers to understand the needs and demands of their employees, which is crucial for fulfilling them (Lings, 2004). Yu and To (2013) found strong support for internal communication effect on employee behaviours such as attitude and compliance. Similarly, Ruizalba et al. (2014) found that internal communication had a more significant effect on employee factors such as commitment and satisfaction than other IMO elements. Internal communication has a consistency value of 0.89

which is very close to the threshold of 0.9 with only a minimal deviation of 0.01. Considering the proximity to the threshold and literature support for the significance of internal communication for employee outcomes, it can be concluded that internal communication is a necessary condition.

5.8.3 TRUTH TABLE

After the necessary condition analysis, a truth table needs to be constructed. A truth table is a data matrix that contains every combination of independent variables (Ragin, 2008b). Each combination is represented by a row along with its frequency (number of cases with that configuration) and consistency (extent to which configuration leads to desired outcome) (Ragin, 2006). The initial truth table before its minimization is shown in Table 20.

Table 20. Truth table (Study 1, fsQCA software)

Cal_IVE_2	Cal_IC_2	Cal_TR_2	Cal_WFB_2	number	Cal_COSE_2	raw consist.
1	1	1	1	7 (41%)		0.819132
1	1	0	1	2 (52%)		1
0	1	0	0	1 (58%)		0.787848
1	1	0	0	1 (64%)		0.895879
0	1	0	1	1 (70%)		0.988752
0	1	1	1	1 (76%)		1
0	0	0	0	1 (82%)		0.823247
1	0	0	0	1 (88%)		0.796696
0	0	0	1	1 (94%)		0.871244
1	0	1	1	1 (100%)		0.880699
0	1	1	0	0 (100%)		
1	1	1	0	0 (100%)		
0	0	1	0	0 (100%)		
1	0	1	0	0 (100%)		
1	0	0	1	0 (100%)		
0	0	1	1	0 (100%)		

According to the software manual, when a necessary condition is identified, it can be removed from the truth table analysis (Ragin, 2008b). Therefore, the rows where internal communication is absent, i.e. marked ‘0’, need to be removed. Next, the truth table needs to be reduced to only relevant configurations using frequency and consistency thresholds. For small samples under 50 cases, Ragin (2008a) recommends a frequency threshold of 1. Fiss (2011) suggests a minimum consistency threshold of at least 0.80 and above. Based on these recommendations, the cut offs were set at 1 for frequency and 0.8 for consistency. After reducing the truth table, the remaining six configurations that met the thresholds remained. The finalised truth table is presented below (Table 21).

Table 21. Reduced truth table (Study 1, fsQCA software)

Cal_IVE_2	Cal_IC_2	Cal_TR_2	Cal_WFB_2	number	Cal_COSE_2	raw consist.
1	1	0	1	2	1	1
0	1	1	1	1	1	1
0	1	0	1	1	1	0.988752
1	1	0	0	1	1	0.895879
1	1	1	1	7	1	0.819132
0	1	0	0	1	0	0.787848

5.8.4 ANALYSIS OF SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS

The fourth step is analysing sufficient conditions from the truth table. To achieve that, the fsQCA algorithm was employed, which utilises Boolean algebra that reduces the truth table to its most simple logical expressions (Fiss, 2011; Salonen et al., 2021). In other words, the algorithm produces sets of most simple and explanatory conditions to achieve the desired outcome. These sets are often referred to as solutions.

The fsQCA algorithm provides three types of solutions by default: a complex solution, a parsimonious solution, and an intermediate solution. A complex solution typically includes all possible combinations of conditions, which makes its interpretation difficult and often impractical (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). A parsimonious solution includes only the core conditions that cannot be absent from any solution, and usually is the shortest solution (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). Intermediate solution is more simplified than the complex one and it includes the core conditions from the parsimonious solutions together with peripheral conditions. Unlike core conditions, peripheral conditions have a weaker relationship with the outcome but are nevertheless helpful for achieving it along with the core conditions (Salonen et al., 2021). Researchers are recommended to analyse the intermediate solution as it is considered to the most interpretable and well-rounded, and contains both core and peripheral solutions (Ragin, 2008b; Pappas and Woodside, 2021).

The truth table algorithm in fsQCA software achieved two configurations in the intermediate solution that consistently lead to the outcome. Table 22 shows the intermediate solution. Complex and parsimonious solutions can be seen in Appendix 5. The quality of a solution in fsQCA is evaluated based on the solution coverage and consistency. According to Fiss (2011), solution consistency should be above 0.75. The resulting solution's consistency is above that threshold at 0.8, suggesting that the solution accurately captures the causal relationship between IMO dimensions and COSE. In terms of coverage, the solution explains about 83% of the cases in the sample.

Table 22. Intermediate solution (Study 1)

Outcome: Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE)	Configurations	
	C1	**C2**
Identify value exchange (IVE)		●
Internal communication (IC)	●	●
Training (TR)		⊗
Work-family balance (WFB)	●	
Raw coverage	0.791236	0.304338
Unique coverage	0.526041	0.0391432
Consistency	0.812437	0.921027
Solution coverage	0.83038	
Solution consistency	0.7991	

Notes: Black circles (●) indicate the presence of the condition. White circles with 'x' (⊗) indicate absence of the condition. Large circles indicate a necessary/core condition; small circles indicate a peripheral condition. Blank spaces show irrelevance of a condition.

As the last step of fsQCA analysis, the solution needs to be interpreted. The solution shown in Table 22 identifies two configurations of IMO dimensions (C1 and C2), or 'pathways', that consistently lead to COSE. This means that there are two combinations of IMO dimensions that consistently lead to high levels of COSE.

As expected, internal communication is crucial for achieving COSE, as it appears in both pathways and was earlier found to be a necessary condition. According to the results of this study, COSE cannot be achieved without internal communication. The level of internal communication in a company has been shown to have a strong effect on customer-oriented employee behaviours, especially front-line employees (Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021; Lings, 2004; Yu and To, 2013; Ruizalba et al., 2014). Yu and To (2013) found that internal communication is antecedent to employee behaviours, due to it fostering trust and reciprocity between the employee and organisation. Ferdous, Polonsky and Bednall (2021) found appropriate levels of internal communication help employees identify with the company's goals and later reflect that in their behaviours. Similarly, Ahmed, Rafiq and Saad (2003) showed that internal communication contributes to developing individual competencies in employees. Internal communication therefore lays the groundwork for other conditions to have their auxiliary effect. Without effective internal communication, employees may not have enough clarity about their role, general expectations and company's values. An appropriate level of internal communication is therefore a base on which employees can develop their skills and behaviours further. Necessary conditions are critical for achieving the outcome, but on their own, they are not enough to guarantee it. Therefore, internal communication alone is not enough to achieve desirable levels of COSE. That is why sufficient conditions, both core and peripheral, are analysed as well.

Identify value exchange and work-family balance are conditions that appeared both in parsimonious and intermediate solutions provided by fsQCA. This means that they are core conditions. In other words, when either of these two conditions is present (providing internal communication is already present) achieving COSE is highly likely. Negation (or absence) of training has been identified as a peripheral condition, as it appears in the intermediate solution, but not in the parsimonious one.

It is important to discuss what the terms 'negation' and 'absence' mean in fsQCA terminology. The terms have been used interchangeably in literature and are typically marked by a '~' symbol or a crossed-out white circle (Ragin, 2008a; Fiss, 2011). It is important to note that 'absence' in fsQCA does not mean what it does in colloquial language. If a presence of a condition, for example, training, means a high level of training, then its absence or negation means non-high levels of training, in other words, low levels of training (Pappas, 2018). Negation or absence of a condition can therefore be as causally important in Boolean algebra as a presence of a condition (Ragin, 2008b). There is often confusion around these terms, with some authors referring to conditions that do not affect the outcome as 'absent', while others do not fully explain the meaning of a condition's absence in practical terms (Nagy et al., 2017; Woodside, 2017). Fiss (2011) suggests using the terms ‘do not care’ or ‘irrelevant’ to refer to conditions that have no effect on the outcome. For this reason, the terms ‘negation’ and ‘irrelevance’ are adopted in this thesis to avoid confusion. In the context of this study, a negation of a condition means low levels of this condition. This clarification is reasonable given the calibration method that uses ‘slightly disagree’ as a cut off for non-membership (Pappas, 2018; Ding, 2022). The conditions are referred to as irrelevant when they play no role in the outcome in any given solution.

In the first configuration (see Table 22, C1), internal communication and work-family balance lead to high levels of COSE. In other words, if there is effective communication between the cafe manager and their subordinates regarding goals, values, and employees’ needs combined with support for balancing work and family commitments, cafe employees are more likely to be customer oriented. Internal communication is necessary but is not enough on its own to achieve high levels of COSE. However, when coupled up with work-family balance, high level of COSE is guaranteed even without training and identify value exchange. The latter conditions are not featured in this configuration, meaning that they do not affect COSE in this particular scenario.

The second configuration (see Table 22, C2) indicates that high levels of COSE can be achieved by a combination of the following conditions: internal communication, identify value exchange, and negation of training. Identify value exchange is a core condition in this pathway, meaning that it ensures a higher level of COSE when paired with the necessary internal communication. Negation of training, i.e. low levels of training, has a weaker relationship with COSE and is less important than identify value exchange, but it still contributes to the outcome by enhancing the core condition. When these conditions are satisfied, COSE can be achieved without employees having a work-family balance, as this condition does not have an effect on the outcome in this pathway.

To summarise, the results show that not a single IMO dimension alone is enough to achieve COSE, but instead a combination of its elements is needed. This emphasizes the causal complexity that exists between the two concepts. Moreover, the results indicate two equifinal ways to achieve employee’s customer orientation through management approach. While internal communication is non-negotiable for desired employee behaviours, other factors can be flexibly combined to achieve COSE. Interestingly, training was shown to have the least effect on COSE with low levels of training contributing to the outcome in only one of the pathways.

The two pathways found to consistently lead to high levels of COSE can be represented using Boolean algebra in a form of a formula (Figure 7). This formula can be interpreted as: high levels of COSE can be achieved if either internal communication and work-family balance are both present, or if internal communication, identify value exchange, and low levels of training are present.

Figure 7. FsQCA formula for achieving high COSE (own elaboration)

$$(IC * WFB) + (IVE * IC * {\sim}TR) \rightarrow COSE$$

5.9. DISCUSSION

5.9.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study contribute to the fields of IMO and COSE. Literature review has shown that IMO encourages customer-oriented behaviours in employees through increased empowerment, commitment and capabilities (Lings and Greenley, 2009, 2010; Gounaris, 2006, 2008; Fang, Chang and Chou 2014, Al Samman and Mohammed, 2020). Nevertheless, as far as literature indicates, there is no research that links the concept of IMO and a four-dimensional conceptualisation of COSE proposed by Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003). Moreover, this study aims to add to knowledge by taking a different approach to examining antecedent relationships using fsQCA. This method yields results that are both nuanced and practical and can assess how combinations of IMO elements together can achieve COSE, which has not previously been done in another research. Several studies have explored the effects of the IMO dimensions on employee outcomes and came to contrasting conclusions. Tortosa, Sanchez-Garcia and Moliner (2010) analysed the effects of IMO dimensions on job satisfaction and interaction quality and found that only intelligence generation affected those outcomes. Martin and To (2013) found that internal communication had the biggest effect on job satisfaction, while Yu and To (2013) findings show that both intelligence dissemination and internal communication are linked to employee attitudes. In contrast, Kaur, Sharma and Seli (2009) and Lings and Greenley (2010) found that information response has the strongest effect on employees. The results of this study show that in the context of hospitality industry and small independent cafes, the presence of internal communication in the business is mandatory for achieving a high level of COSE. This implies that out of all IMO dimensions, effective communication of goals, values and employees' needs is the crucial foundation for customer-oriented behaviours. Interestingly, however, the results suggest that internal communication, while necessary, needs to be combined with other IMO elements to achieve customer orientation. This study offers two pathways to achieving high levels of COSE through IMO.

The first pathway is combining internal communication with a high level of work-family balance. This combination leads to high levels of COSE even when training and identify value exchange (a sub-dimension of intelligence generation) are not fulfilled. Therefore, when there is effective communication and support for employees in balancing work and family commitments, employees exhibit higher levels of customer orientation. This highlights the critical role of both effective communication and supportive workplace policies in fostering a customer-focused service culture. The irrelevance of training and intelligence generation in this configuration suggests that while these factors may influence COSE, they are not crucial in the presence of strong internal communication and work-family balance. Ruizalba et al. (2014) corroborate these findings, showing that both internal communication and work-family balance had a stronger effect on employee outcomes than training. The findings of Study 1 support that work-family balance is indeed an important aspect of the response dimension of IMO (Ruizalba et al., 2014; Muñoz, Kazakov and Ruiz-Alba, 2024).

The second pathway offers a different approach and includes internal communication and identify value exchange, as well as low levels of training. This solution suggests that effective communication and mutual recognition between employees and the company strongly contribute to achieving COSE. Interestingly, this pathway shows that absence of high level of training does not hinder customer-oriented behaviours. The irrelevance of work-family balance in this configuration suggests that in some contexts, particularly when there is a strong value alignment between employees and organisation, work-family balance may not be crucial.

These configurations emphasise that there are multiple ways to achieve high levels of COSE in a company. While certain conditions like work-family balance, identify value exchange and training can be important, their impact may vary depending on the presence of other conditions and the overall context. The results of this study align with social exchange theory and equity theory, as they showed that when employees are cared for by the company, they respond by exhibiting favourable customer-oriented behaviours.

5.9.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The fsQCA method offers a detailed understanding of the various combinations of conditions that contribute to the outcome, thus providing actionable guidance for practitioners. The results of this study offer valuable insights for managers of small independent hospitality businesses aiming to enhance customer orientation among their frontline employees.

Firstly, it is crucial to ensure effective internal communication as it is the foundation for customer-oriented behaviours in frontline employees. Managers should prioritise clear, consistent, and open communication channels where employees and managers can discuss feedback, concerns, needs, or even suggestions. Regular employee-manager meetings, feedback sessions, and transparent communication about goals can help employees be aligned with the company's customer service objectives.

Secondly, managers should investigate enhancing policies that help their employees manage their work and family responsibilities. Flexible hours and having empathy and understanding of employee's personal commitments can lead to higher levels of customer orientation in frontline employees.

Thirdly, in cases where flexible hours may not be achievable, managers need to prioritise employee recognition. Identify value exchange refers to creating a culture of mutual respect through recognition of employee's needs and contributions. Encouraging employees to share their ideas, express their concerns and values can enhance their commitment to providing better service.

Lastly, the findings suggest that managers could benefit from rethinking their training approaches. The results show that, surprisingly, training has the least effect on frontline employees' customer-orientation. It is possible that in the context of small independent cafes, traditional training may not always be necessary in the presence of other conditions that foster respect, value exchange and recognition. Managers might consider informal, on-the-job trainings that focus on real-time learning and prioritise value alignment over formal training.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2

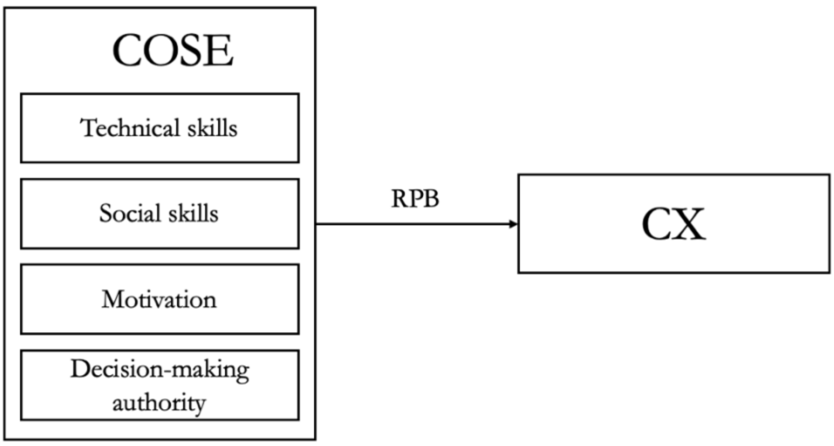
6.1. OVERVIEW

The second Study aims to understand how the dimensions of COSE affect CX. According to the model by Hennig-Thurau (2004) adopted for Study 2, COSE has four dimensions: technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority. For CX, a conceptualisation by Klaus and Maklan (2013) was employed, which consists of the following dimensions: peace-of-mind, moments-of-truth, and outcome focus. According to the authors, peace-of-mind refers to the emotional benefits a customer has from interactions with a service provider. Moments-of-truth are critical touchpoints that define customer's future repurchase decisions in case of something going wrong (Klaus and Maklan, 2013). Finally, outcome focus refers to prioritising the results from a service interaction that a customer aims to achieve. This study will rely on these conceptualisations of COSE and CX to examine the causal links between these two concepts in the context of independent cafes in London.

6.2. RESEARCH MODEL

In Chapter 3 it was proposed that COSE has a direct positive effect on CX. Using fsQCA, this study aims to see how the various elements of COSE and their combinations can contribute to enhancing CX. The resulting research model for Study 2 is presented below (Figure 8):

Figure 8. Research model for Study 2 (own elaboration)



Building on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3, as well as the literature review on the relationship between COSE and CX, Research Proposition B is put forward:

> **Research Proposition B:** There exist necessary and sufficient COSE conditions, as well as specific pathways, that can enhance CX.

6.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were addressed prior to carrying out Study 2. Ethics application was made via VRE before the data collection process. The application consisted of the consent form, participant information sheet, list of indicative questions, and the ethics form.

The consent form signed by the participants included respondents' willingness to participate in the study, acknowledgement of their right to withdraw at any time, consent to the data to be used for research, and contact information of the researcher should they want to get in touch. The participant information sheet provides detailed information about the study, including its objective to understand the causal links between employee behaviours and experience of the customer, what participation will involve, anonymity, and how the data will be used and handled during the research stage. A list of indicative questions was drafted to outline the types of questions that will be asked of participants is the Study 2 surveys. This list included sample questions about COSE and CX.

The ethics form was completed in VRE to determine the nature of research for Study 2. The research design this this study did not imply any harm or discomfort for the participants or the researcher and did not involve vulnerable participants. Therefore, this research was also classified as Class 1 (research with no or minimal ethical implications) under the University of Westminster guidelines.

The aforementioned documents were submitted to Virtual Research Environment (VRE) of the University of Westminster prior to carrying out data collection. These documents can be seen in Appendix 4. As this research was classified as Class 1, it was signed off by the director of studies as not requiring approval.

Despite the Class 1 classification, some aspects in Study 2 required careful consideration:

Informed consent. To ensure that respondents understood what participation entails, the researcher explained the purpose of research and the voluntary nature of participation to all participants. The consent form and the participant information sheet were also presented to them.

Anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by not collecting any identifying information such as visitors' names or the name of the coffee shops they attended. As with Study 1, surveys were numbered to ensure the responses remained untraceable to the individuals.

Data Protection. The participants were assured that response data will be stored securely. The University of Westminster's OneDrive (which is compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018) was used store the survey responses. The collected data was protected by user ID and a password, accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and not shared with any third parties.

Once the ethical considerations were addressed and the ethics application signed off, surveys for Study 2 were created via Google Forms and the data collection could be carried out.

6.4. SAMPLE

Similarly to Study 1, the research for the second study was conducted in independent cafes in London. This time, instead of approaching employees, 60 customers were approached in various independent cafes in London. The data for Study 2 was collected within the same time frame as that of Study 1. Study 2 focuses on customers rather than employees because it aims to obtain unbiased insight into their experience in the cafes. Once again, purposive sampling technique was employed, guided by the pragmatic paradigm that emphasises generation of actionable insights. The customers for Study 2 were selected from the cafes that participated in Study 1. This approach was chosen for various reasons. Firstly, it ensures that the customer feedback in Study 2 is relevant to the service environment explored in Study 1. Selecting participants from the same environment allows for a more accurate assessment of how employee practices impact CX within the same context. Moreover, focusing on customers from the same cafes helped achieve higher consistency when exploring the causal links between IMO, COSE and CX, due to controlling for external variables such as cafe style, food, or environment. This way it is easier to attribute observed CX to the employee behaviours and organisational practices identified in Study 1, rather than external factors. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed using Google Forms.

The questionnaire was administered in person using an iPad as well as QR codes. The use of iPad made it easier for some customers to respond, therefore encouraging higher participation rates. For other customers, a QR code was offered, which directed them to the Google Forms questionnaire upon scanning. Customers were approached individually while they were sitting in cafes enjoying their drinks or food, or while waiting for their order at the counter. Participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses and that no personal identifying information was collected at any stage of the process. Collected responses in Google Forms were later aggregated and exported to Excel for data preparation. After excluding single-choice response surveys, 56 usable questionaries were obtained.

6.5. DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority (70%) of Study 2 participants were aged between 18 to 30 years old. There was an equal split between male and female participants, and 5% identifying as 'other'. Most of the participants have obtained either an undergraduate (43%) or a master's degree (38%). About 27% of customers earned less than £10,000 in the past year, which could be attributed to a large proportion of current students in the sample. About 25% of participants were earning over £60,000.

Table 23. Study 2 demographics (own elaboration)

Study 2 respondent's demographics	Number of respondents	%	Study 2 respondent's demographics	Number of respondents	%
Frequency of visits			***Age***		
First time visit	20	36%	18 – 30	39	70%
Several times a week	15	27%	31 – 40	11	20%
Several times a month	10	18%	41 – 50	1	2%
Several times a year	11	20%	51 – 60	4	7%
Duration of visit			61 – 70	1	2%
Order for takeaway	13	23%	70 +	0	0%
Order and stay for ~15 mins	14	25%	***Education***		
Stay more than 15 mins	29	52%	High school or less	4	7%
Visitor's residential status			College or further education	5	9%
Living in the UK	49	88%	University undergraduate	21	38%
Visiting UK	7	13%	University postgraduate	24	43%
Gender			Doctorate	2	4%
Female	26	46%	***Income***		
Male	27	48%	< £10,000	15	27%
Other	3	5%	£10,001 – £20,000	7	13%
			£20,001 –£40,000	10	18%
			£40,001 – £60,000	11	20%
			£60,001 – £80,000	7	13%
			£80,001 – £100,000	2	4%
			> £100,000	4	7%

The majority of participants (88%) were currently living in the UK at the moment of responding, while the rest were visiting. About 36% of customers reported that it was their first visit to the cafe, and 27% have said they visit it on the weekly basis. Most customers (52%) usually stay more than 15 minutes in the cafe to enjoy their food and drink, while the rest stay only briefly (25%) or order for takeaway (23%). A more detailed breakdown of the participants' demographics can be seen in Table 23.

6.6. MEASUREMENT

The full questionnaire that was addressed to the cafe customers comprised of 26 questions, including multiple-choice, 7-point Likert scale, and open-ended questions (gender identity). The first questions related to the customer's visiting habits as well as several demographic questions about their gender, age, education, and income. The survey included 12 questions about COSE and 7 questions about CX.

Study 2 aims to explore the impact of COSE on CX, which required feedback directly from the customers to accurately capture their perceptions and experiences. Due to the methodology of fsQCA, it was essential to maintain consistency in the data sources by ensuring that manager's responses were not mixed with those of customers. Therefore, for results reliability, the questions regarding COSE were addressed to the customers in Study 2, unlike Study 1 where these questions were disseminated to the managers. This approach ensured a clear examination of the relationships between the concepts while adhering to fsQCA methodology.

The items used to measure COSE and CX were based on established scales, with some adaptations to fit the purpose of this study. To measure COSE, a scale developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004) was used, which consists of 3 items for each of the dimensions: technical skills (TS), social skills (SS), motivation (M), and decision-making authority (DMA). As for CX, a scale developed by Klaus and Maklan (2013) was adapted, measuring the following dimensions: peace-of-mind, moments-of-truth, and outcome focus. These items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, anchored at 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree'.

6.7. AGGREGATE SCORE CALCULATION

The responses collected via Google Forms were first aggregated into one file and assembled using Excel. Responses containing identical answers to all questions (straight-lining responses) were removed to ensure that the remaining data accurately reflects the opinions and perceptions of engaged respondents. This allows for more valid and trustworthy findings. Once those responses were removed, 56 usable responses remained.

The next step prior to fsQCA analysis was calculating aggregate scores. The concepts of COSE and CX in this study were measured by multiple items. Therefore, similarly to Study 1, aggregate scores for each variable need to be created. For COSE, each of the dimensions (TS, SS, M, and DMA) were measured by 3 items. Aggregate scores were calculated for these dimensions using average values. An example below is showing the aggregate score calculation for technical skills (Table 24). This process was repeated for social skills, motivation and decision-making authority.

Table 24. Aggregate score calculation for TS

Case	Technical skills (TS)	Item 1: The employees of this store have a high level of knowledge.	Item 2: The staff here are experts in their job.	Item 3: The employees in this store are highly competent.
1	**6**	6	6	6
2	**6**	6	6	6
3	**3.33**	3	4	3
4	**4**	4	4	4
5	**5**	5	5	5
6	**4.67**	4	5	5
7	**5.33**	5	4	7
8	**3.67**	4	4	3
9	**7**	7	7	7
10	**4**	4	4	4
…	**…**	…	…	…
51	**4**	5	3	4
52	**4**	4	4	4
53	**3**	3	3	3
54	**3**	5	2	2
55	**2.67**	3	3	2
56	**3.67**	5	3	3

CX was also measured with multiple items. Peace-of-mind was measured using 1 item, moments-of-truth by 4 items, and outcome focus – by 2 items. In fsQCA, the outcome variable needs to be a composite measure. Therefore, a multidimensional construct such as CX needs to be aggregated by calculating an average score for all items per case.

6.8. FSQCA ANALYSIS

6.8.1 CALIBRATION

Once the aggregate scores were compiled, calibration into fuzzy sets can be performed. To transform the aggregate scores into fuzzy set values, a direct calibration method was chosen where values are transformed using three anchors: 0.95 for full membership, 0.5 for a cross-over point, and 0.05 for a full non-membership (Ragin, 2008b). As with Study 1, the approach suggested by Wu et al. (2014) was followed to calibrate the original Likert scale scores using the following anchors: 7 for full membership, 5 for a crossover point, and 3 for a full non-membership. The thresholds are summarised below in Table 25.

Table 25. Membership threshold values for fuzzy sets (Study 2)

Variable type	Name	Original Scale	Membership threshold values		
			Full non-membership (0.05)	Crossover point (0.5)	Full membership (0.95)
Outcome	CX	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
Conditions	TS	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	SS	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	M	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)
	DMA	7-point Likert scale 1 – strongly disagree 7 – strongly agree	3 (somewhat disagree)	5 (somewhat agree)	7 (strongly agree)

Once again, we've chosen a score of 7 to represent a full membership. In the context of customer's perceptions of CX and COSE, 'strongly agree' provides an unambiguous threshold for full membership, indicating that those respondents experienced exceptional service. This way the analysis can clearly differentiate between varying levels of COSE and CX allowing for more precise results.

For a crossover point, a threshold of 5 ('somewhat agree') was chosen, similar to Study 1. As discussed previously, respondents might avoid extreme positions, so a score of 5 represents a more genuine midpoint in their responses, as they are only slightly agreeing with the statement, while a score of 4 can be seen as non-committal. Customers who choose 'somewhat agree' are not dissatisfied but are unsure about whether they had a positive experience, which represents a point of ambiguity this study intends to capture.

Finally, a score of 3 was chosen to represent a full non-membership in accordance with Wu et al. (2014). In the context of CX, even a slight disagreement implies that the customers did not have a high-quality experience, and their needs were unmet during the interaction. A threshold of 3 helps us capture variability of results, rather than just focusing on the extreme negative responses.

With the chosen thresholds, the original 7-point Likert scale responses were transformed into fuzzy-set scores. The fsQCA (version 4.1) was used to calibrate variables using the 'compute' function. The resulting values were in a range of 0 and 1 and labelled Cal_TS, Cal_SS, Cal_M, Cal_DMA, and Cal_CX. The values that are exactly 0.5 are dropped from the analysis by the fsQCA software as they represent maximum ambiguity (Ragin, 2008a). To avoid cases being dropped from analysis, this study followed the suggestion of Fiss (2011) and added a constant of 0.001 to all values in Excel after the primary calibration. The final calibrated values were labelled as Cal_TS_2, Cal_SS_2, Cal_M_2, Cal_DMA_2, and Cal_CX_2 to avoid confusion.

6.8.2 ANALYSIS OF NECESSARY CONDITIONS

As the second step of fsQCA analysis, an analysis of necessary conditions was performed to see whether any of the COSE elements are crucial for achieving CX. An outcome cannot occur without the presence of necessary conditions, although on its own a necessary condition may not be enough to achieve the outcome (Fiss, 2007). Technical skills, social skills, motivation, or decision-making authority, or their negation (identified by '~') were examined to determine whether any of them are necessary to achieve CX.

Table 26. Analysis of necessary conditions (Study 2)

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
Technical skills (TS)	0.82	0.91
~ Technical skills (~TS)	0.45	0.73
Social skills (SS)	0.91	0.88
~ Social skills (~SS)	0.38	0.76
Motivation (M)	0.88	0.92
~ Motivation (~M)	0.42	0.74
Decision-making authority (DMA)	0.75	0.90
~ Decision-making authority (~DMA)	0.55	0.80

Notes: ~ indicates the absence of a condition

A condition is considered necessary if its consistency score is above 0.9 (Ragin, 2008b). The fsQCA analysis showed that social skills are a necessary condition for achieving high levels of CX, as it is the only condition that scored above 0.9 in consistency (Table 26). This finding is in line with previous research, as Vanucci and Pantano (2018) have found that employee's social skills enhance CX through building positive relationships. Similarly, Alhelalat, Ma'moun and Twaissi (2017) found that social skills of employees such as eye contact and empathy, positively affect customer's dining experiences.

6.8.3 TRUTH TABLE

Once the necessary conditions analysis has been performed, a truth table can be constructed. According to Ragin (2008b), if a necessary condition has been identified, it should be removed from the truth table analysis. Therefore, all rows in the truth table where social skills were absent (marked 0) were removed. The resulting truth table is presented in Table 27.

Table 27. Truth table (Study 2, fsQCA software)

Cal_TS_2	Cal_SS_2	Cal_M_2	Cal_DMA_2	number	Cal_CX_2	raw consist.
1	1	1	0	8		1
0	1	1	1	5		1
0	1	0	1	2		0.992337
1	1	1	1	22		0.990788
1	1	0	1	3		0.967918
0	1	1	0	1		0.962642
0	1	0	0	4		0.91017
1	1	0	0	0		

Next, the truth table needs to be reduced using frequency and consistency to filter the relevant configurations (Ragin, 2008b). For small and medium samples up to 150 cases, a frequency threshold of 1 or 2 is recommended (Ragin, 2008a). As the sample was relatively small at 56 respondents, a frequency threshold of 1 was selected. The minimal consistency threshold for truth table is 0.8 (Fiss, 2011), although a researcher should choose a threshold that is appropriate for their specific case. One way to establish the correct consistency threshold is to observe where a natural break point in the consistency values is (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). To do that, raw consistency scores first need to be sorted from lowest to highest, which has been done in Table 27. As can be observed from the table, the largest increment in values is between 0.91017 and

0.962642, which indicates that 0.91017 is the natural breakpoint. Therefore, the consistency threshold was set just above it at 0.92. The final reduced table is presented below in Table 28.

Table 28. Reduced truth table (Study 2, fsQCA software)

Cal_TS_2	Cal_SS_2	Cal_M_2	Cal_DMA_2	number	Cal_CX_2	raw consist.
1	1	1	0	8	1	1
0	1	1	1	5	1	1
0	1	0	1	2	1	0.992337
1	1	1	1	22	1	0.990788
1	1	0	1	3	1	0.967918
0	1	1	0	1	1	0.962642
0	1	0	0	4	0	0.91017

6.8.4 ANALYSIS OF SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS

After the construction of truth table, an analysis of sufficient conditions can be performed. The fsQCA algorithm was used, which is based on Boolean algebra to produce sets of conditions that consistently lead to CX. The algorithm produced three sets of solutions: a complex solution, a parsimonious solution, and an intermediate solution. The role of parsimonious solution in the analysis is to identify the core conditions, as they are the only ones included in this type of solution. Understanding the core conditions is important because they are central to the most robust configurations that consistently lead to the outcome and can therefore provide key insights into the main factors causing the outcome. The parsimonious solution is presented below in Table 29.

Table 29. Parsimonious solution (Study 2, fsQCA software)

Parsimonious solution

Condition	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Cal_M_2	0.878626	0.167637	0.922299
Cal_DMA_2	0.754259	0.0432699	0.900865

Solution coverage: 0.921896

Solution consistency: 0.874535

The parsimonious solution identified that motivation (Cal_M_2) and decision-making authority (Cal_DMA_2) are core conditions, meaning they will be central to achieving CX in the configurations that are analysed further.

Ragin (2008a) and Pappas and Woodside (2021) recommend analysing the intermediate solution as it is most practical and interpretable, including both core and peripheral solutions. In this case, the complex and intermediate solutions produced the same combination of conditions (Appendix 5). Two configurations were identified that consistently result in high levels of CX, as demonstrated in the intermediate solution (Table 30).

Table 30. Intermediate solution (Study 2)

Outcome: Customer Experience (CX)	Configurations	
	C1	**C2**
Technical skills (TS)		
Social skills (SS)	●	●
Motivation (M)	●	
Decision-making authority (DMA)		●
Raw coverage	0.838894	0.715615
Unique coverage	0.152398	0.0291189
Consistency	0.963433	0.959848
Solution coverage	0.868013	
Solution consistency	0.941274	

Notes: Black circles (●) indicate the presence of the condition. White circles with 'x' (⊗) indicate absence of the condition. Large circles indicate a necessary/core condition; small circles indicate a peripheral condition. Blank spaces show irrelevance of a condition.

The quality of the solution can be evaluated based on solution coverage and consistency (Ragin, 2008b). According to Fiss (2011), solution consistency should be no lower than 0.75. The solution's consistency score is 0.94, therefore it can be concluded that the solution accurately captures the relationship between the COSE elements and CX. This solution's coverage is also high at 0.87, meaning that it explains about 87% of the cases in the sample.

The last step in fsQCA analysis is the interpretation of the configurations. The intermediate solution identified two configurations (C1 and C2), meaning that there are two combinations of COSE dimensions that consistently lead to high levels of CX. As identified earlier, a high level of social skills is a necessary condition. Therefore, this COSE dimension is present in both configurations. Analysis showed that high levels of CX cannot be achieved without employees displaying strong social skills. A high level of social skills is therefore a non-negotiable factor, which is needed to build the desired CX in combination with additional conditions. Interestingly, technical skills do not appear in either of the two pathways. No condition has been identified as peripheral in this solution, as intermediate solution only featured core and necessary conditions.

The first configuration (C1) includes social skills and motivation. While social skills are a necessary condition without which CX cannot be achieved, their presence alone does not lead to high levels of CX. This pathway shows that social skills coupled with high levels of motivation is enough to produce a high level of CX. This means that motivated employees that display empathy and good attitude can evoke positive response in customers even without high levels of technical skills or autonomy to make on-the-spot decisions (for example, customising orders).

The second configuration (C2) features social skills combined with decision-making authority. In this scenario, the presence of high levels of technical skills or motivation are irrelevant for achieving CX. In other words, when employees display strong social skills and are empowered to make prompt decisions regarding customers without seeking manager's approval, customers will likely have a great experience, even if employees lack expertise or motivation. In this scenario, social skills and decision-making authority are the key driving factors that lead to CX.

In summary, the results of Study 2 show that none of the COSE conditions alone can lead to CX. However, to achieve the desired CX, it may not be necessary to simultaneously have high levels of technical skills, social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority. A combination of social skills with either motivation or decision-making authority may be enough to provide a good experience for the customers.

The two pathways found to consistently lead to high levels of CX can be represented using Boolean algebra in a form of a formula (Figure 9). The interpretation of this formula is as follows: high levels of CX can be achieved if either social skills and motivation are both present, or if social skills and decision-making authority are present.

Figure 9. FsQCA formula for achieving high CX (own elaboration)

$$(SS * M) + (SS * DMA) \rightarrow CX$$

6.9. DISCUSSION

6.9.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study contribute to the field of COSE and its outcomes in the hospitality literature. As understood from the literature review, there is a lack of research that links Hennig-Thurau's (2004) four-dimensional conceptualisation of COSE with CX. Although there is research linking COSE with customer satisfaction (CSAT), this concept is vastly different from CX. CSAT focuses narrowly on a customer's satisfaction with a product, service, or transaction, and is often measured by one-dimensional questions about whether the expectations have been met. However, satisfaction does not capture a whole holistic experience of the customer. One may be satisfied with the product in principle, yet not have a good experience overall. Therefore, studying COSE with a multidimensional holistic conceptualisation of CX can add to knowledge in the hospitality field.

Only one qualitative study was found that directly links the concepts of COSE and CX. Morales Mediano et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative survey to better understand how COSE can influence CX, differentiation, and customer well-being in family businesses. According to the responses they have obtained, social skills were deemed to be most important for CX according to the managers. The results of Study 2 corroborate these findings, as social skills were identified to be the necessary condition for achieving high levels of CX in independent cafes. That is because employees who have strong social skills can emphasise with the customer better and therefore serve them better (Morales Mediano et al., 2019). Moreover, Lafrenière (2019) argues that when an employee shows a friendly attitude and ability to interpret customer's moods and expectations, it causes positive emotions in a customer, while emotionless employees who act unmotivated often evoke negative responses in customers. Morales Mediano et al. (2019) also noted that the respondents identified motivation as a second most important factor for CX, which is in line with the first configuration (C1) presented in the solution. Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) argue that motivation is the key driver of employee's behaviours, which includes displaying social and technical skills. Therefore, the results of this study, particularly the first configuration, corroborates existing research.

Nevertheless, Morales Mediano et al. (2019) found that for the context of family businesses, decision-making authority mattered the least, perhaps for the lack of hierarchy in these types of companies. This research shows contrasting results, as decision-making authority was identified to be one of the core conditions. According to the second configuration (C2) of this study, high levels of CX can be achieved by combining social skills with employee's decision-making authority. These results support the findings of Kim and Ok (2010), who found that decision-making authority had the strongest effect on satisfaction in restaurants. Employees with a higher degree of autonomy are more flexible to personalise service to the customer, as well as creating 'customer delight' moments with little extras and attention (Berraies, Chtioui and Chaher, 2019). Moreover, employees that are empowered to make decisions can better manage moments-of-truth by responding to issues promptly (Al-Malood, 2024).

Interestingly, technical skills were not included in the solutions obtained by using fsQCA. These findings echo the results of Study 1 that showed training to be the least important factor in achieving COSE. These results might mean that lack of expertise can be substituted by other factors such as friendly attitude, motivation and ability to make quick decisions. Perhaps the customers who visit independent cafes appreciate the quality of interaction more than employees' technical skills. However, these results are context-specific to small hospitality establishments and therefore may not translate to other types of businesses.

Studying the relationship between COSE and CX fills a significant gap in existing research because CX is a more complex and holistic concept compared to CSAT, as discussed throughout this thesis. While CSAT focuses on satisfaction with specific isolated elements of the transaction, CX encompasses the emotional connections and overall impressions of the company and service during their customer journey. This complexity means that CX provides a more comprehensive understanding of customer needs and wants, making it crucial for companies aiming to develop strategies that enhance the overall customer journey.

6.9.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the benefits of using fsQCA analysis is its applicability to practice. This study has explored how COSE can be leveraged to achieve the desired levels of CX. Based on the findings, several suggestions for managers can be discussed.

Firstly, Study 2 highlights the importance of social skills in the context of independent cafes that are typically smaller establishments. This condition was the sole element of COSE without which high levels of CX cannot be achieved. The necessity of social skills brings attention to the importance of interaction quality between employees and customers. This involves employee's friendly attitude, demonstrating empathy, and anticipating customer needs. Therefore, managers should prioritise cultivating high levels of social skills, which could be done by hiring individuals who already are highly socially adept or putting more effort into training programs to develop these skills.

Secondly, the results of this study indicate that motivation plays a crucial role in providing high quality experience for the customers. Motivated employees appear enthusiastic and committed to provide best possible service, which could result in positive perceptions by the customer and elevate their experience. Coupled with strong social skills, motivation can lead to high levels of CX even when employees lack expertise and decision-making power. Managers should therefore foster a motivating work environment by recognising and rewarding employee efforts and ensuring that they feel valued.

Thirdly, the importance of decision-making authority should not be underestimated. In an environment such as cafes, speed of service is valuable to the customer who may be in a hurry. In that case, employee's ability to make quick decisions without consulting the manager means that they can solve problems and requests quicker. Moreover, giving employees more freedom to make decisions will allow them to personalise service to the customers, therefore leaving them with a unique experience. Once again, coupled with strong social skills, the presence of decision-making authority can even compensate for the absence of motivation and technical skills. Therefore, managers should consider training their employees to make informed decisions and providing them the freedom to do so.

Lastly, technical skills are absent from the configurations of Study 2. While according to fsQCA analysis they are 'irrelevant' for achieving the outcome, it does not mean that low levels of technical skills are acceptable when aiming to improve experience. It may be that customers expect a certain level of technical skills in cafe employees, and therefore take it for granted. Therefore, employee's expertise may simply not be the differentiating factor for customers in assessing their experience. Instead, it is the social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority that are more influential in creating a positive and memorable experience for the customers.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This final Chapter will address the research objectives and questions that were outlined in Chapter 1, summarise the theoretical and practical contributions of this research, and acknowledge the limitations. Suggestions for future research will also be presented.

7.1. ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In Chapter 1, the following research objectives were identified:

O1: Conduct literature analysis of the IMO concept (including antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks).

O2: Review and critically appraise the articles about COSE, identify its antecedents and consequences.

O3: Explore the CX concept, its antecedents and outcomes and theoretical backgrounds.

O4: Explore the relationships that exist between IMO, COSE and CX based on the literature and identified outcomes and antecedents of these concepts.

O5: Develop a conceptual framework based on the findings.

The efforts made to achieve these objectives are summarised in the table below (Table 31).

Table 31. Research objectives and achievements

Research objectives		Achievements
O1	Conduct literature analysis of the IMO concept (including antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks).	Literature review conducted to understand the IMO concept as a hierarchical construct with dimensions and subdimensions.
		Analysis of antecedents and consequences of IMO was carried out, gaps identified pertaining to IMO's relationship with COSE and CX.
		Various theoretical frameworks underpinning IMO are also explored.

O2	Explore the CX concept, its antecedents and outcomes and theoretical backgrounds	Literature review conducted to understand multiple theoretical conceptualisations of CX, and the dimensions identified.
		Gaps identified in relation to CX antecedents.
O3	Review and critically appraise the articles about COSE, identify its antecedents and consequences.	Literature review to examine COSE dimensions and consequences was conducted.
		Different theoretical approaches to COSE were discussed.
O4	Explore the relationships that exist between IMO, COSE and CX based on the literature and identified outcomes and antecedents of these concepts.	Antecedents and outcomes of each concept were evaluated to identify potential causal linkages and mediations.
		Formed propositions about the relationships between IMO, COSE and CX.
		Using fsQCA, causal links between IMO and COSE, as well as COSE and CX are examined.
		Combinations of IMO dimensions leading to COSE are found empirically.
		Combinations of COSE dimensions leading to higher CX are also presented.
O5	Develop a conceptual framework based on the findings.	A conceptual framework was developed drawing on literature linkages between IMO, COSE and CX.
		The framework visualises the interconnection between these concepts and guides this research.
O6	Analyse the causal links between IMO and COSE using fsQCA in Study 1	Necessary and sufficient conditions of IMO were identified.

		Two configurations (pathways) of IMO elements that lead to high COSE were found.
		Theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.
O7	Analyse the causal links between COSE and CX using fsQCA in Study 2	Necessary and sufficient conditions of COSE were identified.
		Two configurations (pathways) of COSE elements that lead to high CX were found.
		Theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

7.2. ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions have guided this research, and propositions have been made for each of these questions. This section summarises the findings in relation to these questions.

RQ1: What is the impact of IMO on CX?

Literature review has shown that there is a notable gap in research that links IMO directly with CX, despite the implied effects of this management approach on experiences. However, there exist several studies that explore the relationship between IMO and CSAT. While CX and CSAT are related concepts, with some authors suggesting CX is an antecedent of CSAT (Caruana, 2002; Rose et al., 2012; Fatma, 2014; Klaus and Maklan, 2013), they are fundamentally different concepts. CSAT primarily focuses on the reaction to specific aspects or a service or product, measuring satisfaction with a particular transaction or interaction. CX, on the other hand, is much broader and more complex, encompassing the overall customer journey, including emotional and phycological responses. The lack of research linking IMO and CX is a significant gap, as CX captures a more holistic and multi-dimensional understanding of how customers form their perceptions.

In light of this, literature review was conducted to examine the effect IMO could have on CX. IMO is an employee-oriented management approach, that encourages treating employees as internal customers and highlights the need to satisfy their needs (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Addressing employees' needs is highly important due to their role in creating CX (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier, 2015; Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013). Employees take part in shaping the experience and representing the company in service settings, so it is essential they receive adequate training to understand the importance of every customer interaction (Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013; Cheung and Ferrier, 2015). As discussed previously, training is a part of IMO response dimension. Therefore, IMO adoption is able to enhance employee skills that are necessary for great CX (Gounaris, 2006). Additionally, organisations that focus on employee experience and foster motivated and empowered workforce were found to be more successful in managing CX (Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). That is because firms play a big part in setting up the structure and favourable environment so that their employees can create a good experience, such as hiring the empathetic and creative people and educating employees on how to adapt and deliver on expectations (Wilder, Collier and Barnes, 2014).

These findings indicate that the way employees are managed internally directly influences the quality of the experience of external customers. Adopting the IMO management approach can establish the necessary organisational conditions to foster CX. By addressing the internal needs of employees and creating an environment that promotes their satisfaction and engagement, organisations can enhance the quality of service delivered, leading to improved CX. This suggests that focus on internal marketing not only benefits employee well-being, but also drives external outcomes.

RQ2: What is the influence of IMO on COSE?

Literature review has shown that the concept of IMO has not been previously studied together with the multidimensional model of COSE developed by Hennig-Thurau (2004). Nevertheless, evidence of the relationship between these concepts was found in other conceptualisations of market orientation. Various researchers have found that IMO adoption favourably influences employee capabilities, motivation, and their willingness to provide quality service, as well as other customer-oriented behaviours (Lings and Greenley, 2009, 2010; Gounaris, 2006, 2008; Fang, Chang and Chou 2014, Al Samman and Mohammed, 2020). Moreover, this research demonstrated that IMO adoption can positively affect each of the dimensions that constitute COSE: technical and social skills, motivation, and decision-making authority. Training is integral to the IMO concept, and companies with a higher IMO adoption level tend to have better training programmes in place (Gounaris, 2006). Training has been shown to have a strong positive effect on the development of technical and social skills, which are first two COSE dimensions (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999; Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003; Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021). Additionally, IMO adoption results in higher employee motivation to provide good customer service, as has been found by Lings and Greenley (2009). Lastly, IMO is positively linked with employee empowerment, which is responsible for employees making confident on-the-spot decisions during service encounter to elevate the experience (Gounaris, 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003).

RQ3: How does COSE influence CX?

After conducting a thorough literature review, it emerged that COSE plays a significant role in shaping CX by influencing the quality of integrations between employees and customers. COSE is a multidimensional concept that encompasses technical and social skills, employee motivation, and decision-making authority, which collectively contribute to better service encounters (Hennig Thurau and Thurau, 2003). Surprisingly, there was a lack of research that explores Hennig-Thurau's (2004) four-dimensional conceptualisation of COSE with CX. However, literature review on related constructs and separate COSE dimensions has shown that this concept could have a positive effect on CX. For example, it was found that motivated employees who present strong social skills can better manage customer interactions by offering a more personalised and emotionally positive experiences (Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). Delcourt et al. (2013) further supported this by demonstrating that employee's emotional competence positively affects customer loyalty and satisfaction. Similarly, Brady and Cronin (2001) have demonstrated that customer orientation positively impacts CSAT. They found that when a firm is customer-oriented, customers perceived the quality of the services as higher, thus enhancing their overall satisfaction. In high-contact industries such as hospitality and in particular, cafes, COSE becomes a critical element for fostering meaningful and positive interaction, thus enhancing the overall CX (Vannucci and Pantano, 2018).

RQ4: What is the mediating effect of COSE in the relationship between IMO and CX?

As established previously, employees have an important role in creating CX. That is especially true in high-relational settings, such as hospitality, where employees act as 'boundary-spanners' that interpret firm's internal information and communicate it to the external customer (Conduit, Matanda and Mavondo, 2014). Literature review was carried out to examine how COSE can mediate the relationship between IMO and CX. As established previously, IMO adoption can increase employee satisfaction, engagement and empowerment (Gounaris 2006; Lings and Greenley, 2009; Gounaris, Vassilikopoulou and Chatzipanagiotou 2010; Domínguez-Falcón, Fernández-Monroy, Galván-Sánchez, 2021). COSE can translate these positive employee outcomes into improved CX, because with a high level of skill, motivation and decision-making authority they are able to provide personalised, emotionally positive and high-quality interactions (Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). Therefore, the proposition was made that COSE mediates the relationship between IMO and CX.

> RQ5: Are there any necessary and sufficient IMO conditions or specific pathways that can enhance COSE?

Guided by the literature review, the causal links between IMO and COSE were examined in Study 1. FsQCA was employed to produce combinations of IMO dimensions that consistently lead to higher levels of COSE. These combinations are referred to as 'pathways' or 'configurations' in fsQCA terminology and can be interpreted as 'recipes' for achieving the desired outcome. The study examined the following elements of IMO: identify value exchange, internal communication, work-family balance, and training. The findings indicate that achieving high levels of COSE cannot be attributed to a single dimension of IMO. Instead, it requires a combination of several factors working together. The study identified that internal communication, one of the IMO dimensions, is fundamental for achieving high levels of COSE, but it must be combined with other factors. Pathway 1 shows that combining internal communication with work-family balance leads to high level customer-focused behaviour in employees. In other words, when there is effective communication and support for employees in balancing work and family commitments, employees exhibit higher levels of customer orientation. This occurs even in the absence of strong training programmes and feeling of mutual recognition between employees and the company (value exchange). The second pathway shows that high levels of COSE can also be achieved by the combination of high level of internal communication and value exchange, as well as low levels of training. This pathway suggests that effective communication paired with mutual recognition strongly contribute to achieving COSE, even when training may be lacking. Work-family balance was not present in this solution, suggesting that in some contexts, particularly when there is a strong value alignment between employees and organisation, work-family balance may not be essential for employees to exhibit customer-oriented behaviours.

RQ6: Are there any necessary and sufficient COSE conditions or specific pathways that can enhance CX?

Once the relationship between COSE and CX was explored by conducting literature review, Study 2 further examined the causal links between these concepts using fsQCA. The findings show that to achieve a higher level of CX, it is not enough to focus on only one of the COSE aspects. Social skills of employees were found to be crucial for achieving CX, but it needs to be combined with other factors to enhance the experience. The first solution in Study 2 suggests that pairing high level of social skills with motivation leads to higher CX levels, even when technical skills and decision-making authority are lacking. Another way of achieving higher levels of CX according to the results of this study was combining high levels of social skills with decision-making authority. In other words, employees with strong social skills who are empowered to make on-the-spot decisions can provide personalised service, contributing to a positive CX. According to the results of the study, this can happen even if they are lacking motivation or technical skills.

These findings provide valuable theoretical insights into how Hennig-Thurau's (2004) conceptualisation of COSE influences CX. Specifically, these findings shed light on the underlying mechanisms by which the different dimensions of COSE, such as motivation, skills, and decision-making authority, affect the quality of customer interactions and overall experience.

7.3. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

7.3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this thesis, a conceptual framework is developed for understanding the relationships between IMO, COSE, and CX. Conceptual frameworks are valuable in research because they provide a structured way to illustrate relationships between concepts, guide research to understand these relationships better, as well as help with hypothesis development. While developing a conceptual framework that links IMO, COSE, and CX, the antecedents and consequences of these concepts and their influence on each other were examined. This process resulted in several contributions that will be discussed below.

Literature review demonstrated that most of the research in the IMO field was focused on the employees' behavioural outcomes, which led to the suggestion that a relationship exists between IMO and COSE. Despite the focus on IMO behavioural outcomes in literature, no study has previously examined IMO with Hennig-Thurau's (2004) conceptualisation of COSE. This conceptualisation of COSE highlights the importance of employee autonomy and motivation, which are crucial for successful service encounters and are coincidently one of the main aims of IMO adoption (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). This alignment is crucial for service employees as satisfied and motivated employees are more likely to be engage in customer-oriented behaviours. Focusing on service employees through the lens of COSE framework highlights their pivotal role in delivering good customer interactions, reinforcing the importance of management practices that prioritise employee well-being and development. By analysing the relationship between IMO and COSE, this research bridges the gap in understanding the mechanisms through which IMO practices influence the level of COSE. Additionally, work-family balance was included in the conceptualisation of IMO in this thesis, which Ruizalba et al. (2014) identified as a component of the response dimension. The results of Study 1 demonstrate that work-family balance plays a significant role in fostering COSE, further validating its inclusion as a critical sub-dimension of IMO. This reinforces the importance of considering employee well-being as an essential factor in driving customer-oriented service behaviours. This analysis also adds to knowledge in the COSE field, proposing IMO as one of its antecedents.

The literature review highlights a notable gap in research regarding COSE within in the context of CX. This emphasises the need for further exploration into how COSE impacts CX. Although the relationship has not been directly examined in existing research, there is evidence to suggest that COSE can influence CX. Various authors have found that interaction quality and emotional competence of employees have a direct positive effect on CX (Gazzoli, Hancer and Kim, 2013; Delcourt et al., 2013). Supporting these findings, Vannucci and Pantano (2018) argue that service employees are the human touchpoints that customers encounter in their journey. They note that employees' social skills, a dimension of COSE, significantly affect CX through building positive relationship with the customer. Moreover, employee motivation, which is another dimension of COSE, has also been found to improve CX as it enables the delivery of personalised experiences (Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). By linking COSE with CX, this research contributes to theoretical knowledge by addressing a gap in literature, as prior studies have not explicitly explored how Hennig-Thurau's four-dimensional COSE model influences CX. This extends our understanding of how employee-customer interactions shape an enhance the experience through technical and social skills, motivation and decision-making authority.

The conceptual framework developed in this thesis proposes a mediating relationship between IMO and CX through COSE, which also has not been explored before. Service employees interpret firm's internal information and communicate it to the external customer, thus translating the positive outcomes of the firm's internal practices into high-quality interactions with customers (Conduit, Matanda and Mavondo, 2014; Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014). By identifying COSE as a mediator, this research highlights the mechanism of how employee empowerment and skill development promoted by IMO can ultimately lead to improved CX. Therefore, this research contributes to the theoretical knowledge by suggesting COSE as a bridge that converts employee-oriented practices into higher CX.

Apart from a mediated relationship, based on the literature review, a proposition is made that IMO can directly influence CX. External outcomes of IMO have been understudied, with only a few papers assessing the consequences of IMO such as performance. The role of IMO in shaping CX extends beyond the influence it has on the employee behaviour towards the customer. By establishing robust internal environment that prioritises employee needs, IMO ensures that the internal communication structures are aligned with the company objectives, which can include goals regarding CX (Lings and Greenley, 2009). Through IMO practices, employees are equipped with knowledge to recognise useful customer patterns and feedback, which they can communicate back to the management for further refinement of customer-oriented strategies (Lings and Greenley, 2010). This information can be later used for tailoring firms' offerings and adjusting touchpoints for better experience. Moreover, IMO fosters employee engagement and participation, encouraging employees to co-create CX strategies with the firm (Gounaris, 2006; Abhari, Sanavi and Wright, 2021). Abhari, Sanavi and Wright (2021) have found that companies that have employee experience management practices, such as IMO, are more successful in managing CX. This focus on aligning internal structures, culture, and customer goals creates an environment where the company can provide consistent, positive interactions for their customers across various touchpoints. Therefore, this research adds to the understanding of the relationship between IMO and CX, suggesting that IMO can have a direct positive effect on CX.

The resulting conceptual framework that links IMO, COSE, and CX contributes to the theoretical knowledge by integrating three previously distinct concepts into a coherent structure, thus offering new insights into their interrelationships. Future researchers can use this framework to study these concepts in different contexts and applying different methodology. Understanding these connections is crucial for refining strategies aimed at improving CX, particularly in service industries where employee behaviour plays an important role.

Additionally, adaptation of existing validated scales for the conceptual framework linking these concepts constitutes a contribution to knowledge. Tailoring the scales and applying them in the context of a comprehensive conceptual framework enhances their applicability and value in understanding how internal practices can shape employee behaviours and customer experiences. This expands the use of these scales and provides a refined tool for future research looking to explore similar dynamics in other service settings. By adapting these scales to fit the specific dimensions of IMO, COSE, and CX discussed in earlier chapters, this research demonstrates their relevance in new settings, thus adding to knowledge in these fields.

7.3.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One of the main contributions of this research lies in its methodological research and the use of fsQCA to examine the connections between IMO, COSE, and CX. The vast majority of empirical studies in the marketing field rely on traditional quantitative methods such as regression analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM). Nevertheless, these methods assume symmetry and linearity between the studied concepts, which often do not capture the complexity of the real word phenomena (Woodside, 2013; Kraus, Ribeiro-Soriano and Schüssler, 2018). In contrast to traditional methods, fsQCA can capture complex non-linear relationships, producing multiple combinations of conditions that lead to the same outcome (Ragin, 2008a). This method can therefore provide deeper insights into situations, which is valuable in fields such as marketing and organisational studies, where complex human behaviour is often the centre subject. The fsQCA method is effective in dealing with causal complexity, providing nuanced insights into how different variables interact to achieve an outcome, thus producing detailed and actionable results (Pappas and Woodside, 2021).

The concepts of IMO and COSE, at the time of writing, have not been explored using fsQCA. Only a few recent studies have employed fsQCA in the CX field (Pekovic and Rolland, 2020; Bawack, Wamba, Carillo, 2021; Ruiz-Alba, Quero and López-Tenorio, 2023), showing that it is a suitable method for analysing complex multidimensional concepts. The results of Study 1 and 2 add to knowledge in these fields by showing how different combinations of IMO dimensions can affect COSE, and how various configurations of COSE dimensions shape CX. The causal links between IMO and COSE, and COSE and CX have not yet been studied through the lens of fsQCA.

The results of Study 1 and 2 demonstrate that no IMO dimension alone is enough for achieving COSE, and similarly, no single COSE element can influence CX on its own. These findings challenge the assumption of linear relationships between factors and outcomes, highlighting the importance of combinatory effects of multiple dimensions. The insights from Study 1 and Study 2 advance the existing knowledge by showing that COSE and CX are not driven by singular elements, but rather by multiple factors working together. By emphasising the need for integrated approach, this research contributes to the understanding of how organisational practices interact with service behaviours and customer experiences. These findings advance the understanding of IMO, COSE, and CX by offering a nuanced exploration of how these factors work in combination to shape employee behaviours and customer perceptions in service settings.

7.3.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO CXM

The rise of interest in CX has brought attention to the difficulty of managing this complex concept. Therefore, Customer Experience Management (CXM) emerged as a new concept attempting to help academics and managers shed light on how CX can be achieved (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Holmlund et al., 2020). Given the relative novelty of the concept, it remains at early stages of development, with limited research and understanding available (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Klink, Zhang and Athaide, 2020). By linking IMO, COSE, and CX, the conceptual framework expands knowledge in the CXM field, where much of the focus is on internal company structures and customer-facing initiatives. Integrating these concepts into one framework can advance the CXM field by showing the mechanism of how internal management practices can be crucial in managing CX.

7.4. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

One of the strengths of using fsQCA approach is its value for practical applications. Throughout Study 1 and Study 2, multiple equifinal pathways were found that practitioners can use to achieve the desired goals.

When it comes to the causal link between IMO and COSE, managers can choose one of the two approaches to achieve customer-oriented behaviours through internal policies. The first way is to focus on fostering internal communication and work-family balance. In the context of independent cafes examined in this research, this approach can achieve high levels of COSE even without high levels of training or value exchange. The second way for managers to achieve high CX, is to cultivate internal communication, value exchange, and presence of training, although in this configuration, low levels of training could be enough. The findings suggest that managers who are willing to increase COSE through internal practices do not necessarily need to invest in all aspects of IMO, but rather focus on a combination of a couple elements. The fact that training did not show to be a crucial factor in achieving customer-oriented behaviours was surprising. This could be because social skills and emotional competence, which were shown to be crucial for COSE, are difficult to train for. Perhaps, informal learning on-the-job and real-life experience could be more impactful in the context of this study than structured training programmes. From a pragmatic point of view, the results of Study 1 reflect the complexity of real-world scenarios and importance of different contexts. This is particularly useful for the practitioners, as managers wishing to achieve a highly customer-oriented workforce may face certain restrictions, such as budget, and therefore may not be able to prioritise the adoption of all elements of IMO. These findings suggest that focusing on adopting some of the IMO factors can still help them achieve that goal.

When it comes to achieving high levels of CX through COSE, the results of Study 2 also suggest two ways of approaching the desired outcome. Firstly, managers could focus on developing employee's social skills and encouraging motivation. According to the results, these two factors can help deliver great experience even with the lack of technical skills and decision-making authority. The second pathway suggests that employee's social skills and their ability to make on-the-spot decisions can lead to high CX in the absence of other factors. These results seem to show the relative unimportance of technical skills, which is somewhat reflected in the results of Study 1, where training was also found to be a secondary factor for achieving good results. The reason for this could be that the customer's place an utmost importance on positive personalised experience and quality of interaction (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014).

This research contributes to practical knowledge by highlighting the holistic nature of the concepts studied. Managers must consider an integrated approach when it comes to IMO and COSE, rather than treating them as isolated strategies. The results of the studies indicate that prioritising various combinations of factors can enable managers to achieve their objectives, offering multiple pathways to success. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for practitioners, especially those managing small businesses, who may face resource constraints such as limited budgets. Despite these limitations, small business managers can still achieve good outcomes by strategically focusing on specific combinations of internal factors most relevant and possible in their context. The approach presented in this research provides actionable insights that align with real-world complexity, enhancing their practical value.

The summary of contributions can be seen in Table 32.

Table 32. Contributions to knowledge

Areas of existing research	Potential research contribution
Internal Market Orientation	Establishing the relationship between IMO and COSE
	Further validating the significance of work-family balance as a critical component of IMO and its impact on COSE
	Identifying two actionable pathways of achieving COSE through IMO adoption
	Proposing a direct relationship between IMO and CX based on literature
Customer Orientation of Service Employees	Expanding the understanding of this understudied concept
	Proposing IMO as an antecedent of COSE based on theoretical foundations found in literature
	Identifying distinct pathways through which COSE can enhance CX
	Proposing a theoretical relationship between COSE and CX based on extensive literature
Customer Experience Management	Analysing IMO as an antecedent to CX
	Developing a conceptual framework linking IMO, COSE, and CX thus developing

	understanding of the mechanisms of attaining CX through organisational factors
	Enhancing the understanding of employee role in CX by analysing the literature and empirically testing the effect of COSE on CX
Methodology	Adaptation of validated scales for conceptual modelling of IMO, COSE, and CX
	Introducing a novel application of fsQCA in the fields of IMO, COSE, and CX
	Providing different paths of achieving the same outcome
	Delivered actionable pathways of achieving COSE and CX, thus informing future organisational strategies

7.5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.5.1 LIMITATIONS

As with any research, this study has certain limitations, though efforts were made to ensure the credibility of the findings. These research limitations were carefully managed to maintain the validity of the results, ensuring the research remains valuable for advancing the understanding in the field.

One of the limitations regarding the quantitative studies of this thesis is their relatively small sample size. For study 1, responses from 17 managers were obtained, and for study 2, 56 customers participated in the study. While these sample sizes may raise a question of generalisability of the findings, the fsQCA method is able to derive valuable findings even from much smaller samples. FsQCA was originally designed for analysing small samples, even though it can handle up to 1000 cases (Salonen et al., 2021). Therefore, fsQCA is particularly suitable for achieving robust findings using small samples (Fiss, 2007).

Another potential limitation lies in the context of this study. The research focused on analysing independent cafes in London, which introduces potential cultural and contextual limitations regarding the findings. Employees' and customers' expectations, as well as their interactions, may vary depending on the country or city size. Moreover, the broader hospitality industry includes multiple business types and sizes, such as restaurants, tourism, recreation and more, which limits the applicability of the findings to the sector as a whole. However, this was beyond the intended scope of this research. Future studies can leverage the conceptual framework developed in this thesis to test the findings in different settings and further explore their applicability. Nevertheless, the results remain relevant within the specific context of this study.

According to pragmatism applied in this thesis, the knowledge generated in this research can be affected by the researcher's and participants' experiences and perceptions. The context-specific nature of pragmatic research means that findings may not always be easily transferable to other settings. However, these concerns were mediated by grounding this research in thorough literature review and by using quantitative analysis with fsQCA. Relying on well-established concepts like IMO, COSE, and CX, strengthened the robustness of the findings, reducing subjectivity while maintaining practical relevance with the use of fsQCA pathways. Quantitative insights were gathered to ensure that the solutions are driven by data rather than subjective interpretation. Researcher reflexivity is also crucial when approaching a study through the lens of pragmatism (Kelly and Cordeiro, 2020). Reflexivity was important in keeping an open mind to unexpected results, such as finding training and technical skills to be not as pivotal in achieving results as initially anticipated. This discovery required careful reflection on the contextual factors of independent cafes. By maintaining a reflective stance, these unexpected findings were acknowledged as valuable insights rather than being forced into established beliefs. This way, through a balance of theory and quantitative findings, the credibility of the pragmatic insights produced in this research was ensured.

7.5.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings and the limitations of this study, various avenues for future research can be offered. To further develop the findings of this research, it could be tested in different cultural settings. The studies were based on the insights found in London. While this city offers great diversity in terms of ages and cultural backgrounds, future research could replicate the studies in different contexts that may include testing it in different countries and in smaller cities. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether the results would produce different configurations.

Additionally, future research could test the findings of Study 1 and 2 in chain establishments, as the expectations of interactions between the company and employees, and the employees and customers could differ. As previously noted, hospitality industry encompasses many types of businesses. It would be valuable to replicate these studies in other high-contact environments beyond cafes, such as hotels or recreational venues. In particular, future research could test whether the effect of training on COSE and technical skills on CX would be more prominent than in the present study.

There are relationships that fall outside of the scope of this thesis that would benefit from empirical investigating. Firstly, future research could collect data on both IMO and perceived CX from the managerial perspectives, ensuring consistency in the data source, and replicate the fsQCA methodology employed in Study 1 and 2. Testing the casual link between IMO and CX using fsQCA would produce actionable pathways on how to achieve better experiences through internal practices, showing different combinations of IMO subdimensions that consistently lead to high CX. This would further advance knowledge in the IMO and CX field and provide practical contributions for managers willing to change their internal strategies. Secondly, the mediative effect of COSE on the relationship of IMO and CX was proposed based on the literature review but was outside of the intended scope of this research. Future research could rely on the conceptual framework proposed in this thesis and test mediation using traditional statistical methods. Finally, future research can refine the propositions RP1 to RP4 into specific, testable hypotheses. This will allow for empirical validation of the proposed relationships, providing quantitative evidence to support the conceptual framework developed in this thesis.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey items for IMO

IMO dimensions	Questions	Notes
Intelligence generation: Identify value exchange	IVE1. One of this company's priorities is to understand the needs of its employees before any decisions are made	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE2. We make sure we meet our employees face to face so as to understand better their needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE3. In the company we regularly conduct studies to identify out employees' needs and expectations.	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE4. An important aspect of our work is to check whether our employees are satisfied with their job and to identify any problems they might have	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Intelligence generation: Internal market segmentation	IMS1. This company classifies its employees into well-defined groups according to their individual needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IMS2. When we draw up a particular policy or aim to implement it we always ask ourselves how it will affect the different segments of employees with similar needs and characteristics	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IMS3. All our employees are treated in exactly the same way, regardless of their needs and individual characteristics	Ruizalba et al. (2014) Reverse coded
Internal communication	IC1. Our supervisors are genuinely interested in listening to what employees have to say about their work, any problems they might have and the suggestions they put forward	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC2. If employees have a personal problem that has a negative effect on their performance, we encourage them to talk to their supervisor about it	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC3. The supervisors in the company are always available to meet personally with an employee if such a meeting is required	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC4. Supervisors are expected to spend time with employees, explaining to them the company's objectives and how these objectives affect company's expectations from each individual employee	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Response to intelligence: Management concern	MC1. The managers of this company invest resources where needed in order to satisfy the specific needs or requirements of employees	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC2. The needs of employees are taken seriously by company managers, and policies are developed with the aim of satisfying these needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC3. The management of this company is clearly geared toward solving any problems that employees may have and providing them with the support they need to perform their job well	Ruizalba et al. (2014)

	MC4. Managers are genuinely interested in employees as people, regardless of how well they perform their job or the results they achieve	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC5. Managers are genuinely interested in hearing about and understanding their employees' feelings insofar as these affect their work	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Response to intelligence: Training	TR1. Prior to implementing a new service, or modifying an existing one, employees are given extensive training in relation to the change and how it will affect their way of working	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	TR2. This company systematically and continuously organises training seminars so that employees develop their skills	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	TR3. If employee is moved to a location or department, their new supervisor will personally provide training in relation to the new role	Ruizalba et al. (2014) Note: changed 'desk' to 'location' to fit the coffee store industry
Response to intelligence: Work/family balance	WFB1. Managers understand the family needs of their employees	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	WFB2. Managers support employees so that they can combine their work and family commitments	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	WFB3. In this company, employees are able to find a balance between work and family life	Ruizalba et al. (2014)

Appendix 2. Survey items for COSE

COSE dimensions	Questions	Notes
Technical skills	TS1. The employees of this store have a high level of knowledge	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	TS2. The staff here are experts in their job	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	TS3. The employees in this store are highly competent	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
Social skills	SS1. The staff have extensive social skills	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	SS2. The employees in this coffee shop are able to consider my perspective	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	SS3. The staff in this store know how to treat a customer well	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)

Motivation	M1. The staff show strong commitment to their job	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	M2. The employees here do their best to fulfil my needs	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	M3. The staff in this store are always highly motivated	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
Decision-making authority	DMA1. The employees here are allowed to decide autonomously in customer matters	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	DMA2. The staff have appropriate room for manoeuvre in solving my problems	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	DMA3. In the case of my requests, the staff here do not need to ask their supervisor for permission	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)

Appendix 3. Survey items for CX

CX dimensions	Questions	Notes
Peace-of-mind	PEA.1 I believe the employees of this coffee shop will continue to provide a welcoming atmosphere and excellent service.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Moments-of-truth	MOM1. Staff are flexible in accommodating my preferences and look out for my needs.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM2. Employees in this coffee shop keep me informed and engaged with its offerings and updates.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM3. The staff in this store exhibit excellent customer service skills.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM4. The staff of this store deal(t) with me correctly when things go (went) wrong	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Outcome focus	OUT1. I receive what I need promptly when I visit this store.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	OUT2. The staff at this coffee shop can relate to my preferences and make me feel valued.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)

Appendix 4. Ethics application form

Researcher	Miss Elizaveta Simakova
Project	Investigation of the Relationships between Internal Market Orientation, Customer Experience and Customer Orientation of Service Employees
College	Westminster Business School
School	Management and Marketing

Project title

Investigation of the Relationships between Internal Market Orientation, Customer Experience and Customer Orientation of Service Employees

1.1 Please provide a description of the background with references to relevant literature (250 words)

The shift from traditional goods-dominant market to service-dominant market has reshaped the competitive business landscape (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Availability of production technology has made quality products more common, meaning that quality alone can no longer guarantee business success. While firms must continue to innovate to keep up, they now face a much more dynamic environment to which they need to adapt (Keiningham et al., 2020). Customers began to prioritise intangible attributes when evaluating products and services, linking their satisfaction to positive experiences throughout the entire customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl, 2017). Consequently, Customer Experience (CX) became one of the research priorities due to its increasing complexity and significant effect on financial performance. Nevertheless, the role of organisational management approach and service employees remains crucial for achieving positive CX (Lings and Greenley, 2005; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier, 2015). The focus of this body of research will therefore explore how CX can be enhanced with aid of Internal Market Orientation (IMO) and Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE). IMO describes a management approach focused on collecting and sharing information about the firm's employees, and then using this information to enhance their satisfaction and well-being (Lings, 2004). COSE refers to the degree to which employees exhibit motivation, skills, and decision-making authority needed to fulfil customer needs (Hennig-Thurau and Thurau, 2003). However, there exists a research gap in understanding how the concepts IMO and COSE can influence CX.

1.2 Please provide a brief description and the aims of your study (250 words)

This project aims to investigate how Customer Experience (CX) is affected by the levels of Internal Market Orientation (IMO) and Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE) in the company. This thesis will also investigate the moderating effect of COSE on the relationship between CX and IMO.

1.3 Please outline the design and methodology of your study and details of any invasive or intrusive procedures (400 words)

The research framework will be developed and empirically tested using questionnaires and multilevel design approach. Data will be gathered from employees and customers in coffee shops in London, UK.

1.4 Start date
01 Dec 2023

1.5 End date of work
31 Mar 2024

External factors

2.1. Does your research include funding from an external organisation and/or external collaborator/s or co-Investigator/s?
No

2.2 Are you seeking ethical approval from the Health Research Authority (HRA)?
No

2.2.1 Are you seeking University sponsorship (as defined by Health Research Authority)?
No

2.3 Are you seeking ethical approval from any other external organisation (which is not the Health Research Authority)?
No

2.3.1 Select one option:

2.4 Have you been asked by an external organisation to produce evidence of ethical approval for your research?
No

Participants

4 Does this research proposal (as proposed to Research Ethics Committee in its current status) include Research Participants (humans and/or animals, either deceased or alive)? Yes

5 If your research fieldwork (virtual or in person) will not be carried out on University premises, please state the location of your research.

Location

Region
London

Country
United Kingdom

Part A

6.1 Will any pain or more than mild discomfort result from the study?
No

6.2 Could the study induce any psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?
No

6.3 Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive physical or psychological testing of human participants that may put someone at risk, e.g. use of treadmill?
No

6.4 Will the study involve raising sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, revelation of medical history, bereavement, illegal activities, etc.)?
No

6.5 Does your work involve relevant material, defined by the Human Tissue Act as material other than gametes, which consists of, or includes, human cells. In the Human Tissue Act, references to relevant material from a human body do not include: (a) embryos outside the human body, or (b) hair and nail from the body of a living person.
No

6.6 Will DNA samples be taken from human participants?
No

6.7 Does your study raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers or participants involved in the project (especially relevant if taking place outside working hours or off-site e.g. not on University premises)?
No

6.8 Does your study involve deliberately misleading the participants (e.g. deception, covert observation)?
No

6.9 Does your work involve administration of a food or non-food substance of a different type from or in abnormally higher or lower amounts than normal or one that is known to cause allergic reaction(s) or potential psychological stress?
No

6.10 Does your study involve issues relating to personal and/or sensitive data?
No

6.11 Does your research involve any 'security sensitive material?
No

6.12. Does your research ethics proposal include off-site (i.e. not on University premises) research fieldwork and travel involving face to face interactions?
Yes

6.12.1. In the UK?
Yes

Please list locations proposed to be visited:
London coffee shops as part of research design

6.12.2. In an overseas territory (i.e. outside of the U.K)?
No

Participants

7.1 Human participants in Health and Social Care settings?
No

7.2 Human participants who may be deemed vulnerable due to their setting(s)?
No

7.3 Expectant or new mothers?
No

7.4 Refugees or asylum seekers or recent migrants?
No

7.5 Minors (under the age of 18 years old)?
No

7.6 Participants in custody (e.g. prisoners or arrestees)?
No

7.7 Participants who may potentially fall under the remit of the Mental Capacity Act
No

7.8 Animals (or animal tissue)?
No

Information to participants

8.1 Will you provide participants with a Participant Information Sheet prior to obtaining informed consent ?
Yes

8.2 Will you describe the procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?

Yes

8.3 Will you obtain informed consent for participation (normally written)?
Yes

8.4 Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?
Yes

8.5 Will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?
Yes

8.6 Will you tell participants that their data will be treated as confidential and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?
Yes

8.7 Will you offer feedback to participants at the end of their participation, upon request (e.g. give them a brief explanation of the study and its outcomes)?
Yes

Attachments

Upload any additional files to support your application which have not already been uploaded within your application. For instance, Participant information sheet, Consent form, Photographic/video consent form, Indicative questions sheet, Insurance cover, Security sensitive research assessment, Health and Safety Risk Assessments, COSHH, Ionising Radiation, Display screens etc.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Investigation of the Relationships between Internal Market Orientation, Customer Experience, and Customer Orientation of Service Employees

Lead researcher: Elizaveta Simakova

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.	Yes ❐	No ❐
I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.	Yes ❐	No ❐
I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).	Yes ❐	No ❐
I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.	Yes ❐	No ❐
I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.	Yes ❐	No ❐
I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).	Yes ❐	No ❐

Participant's Name or Initials:

____

Date:

____

I confirm I have provided an opportunity to participants to retain a copy of Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents.

Researcher's Name: Elizaveta Simakova

INDICATIVE QUESTIONS: Investigation of the Relationships between Internal Market Orientation, Customer Experience, and Customer Orientation of Service Employees

Construct (Abbreviation)	Operational Definition	Source
Customer Experience (CX)	The customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm relating to their purchasing behaviour.	Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Internal marketing orientation (IMO)	Multidimensional construct that consists of formal and informal gathering of information about the company's internal market, disseminating the information pertinent to the internal market, and responding to the information pertinent to the internal market	Lings (2004)
Customer orientation of service employees (COSE)	The degree to which employees exhibit motivation, skills, and decision-making authority needed to fulfil customer Needs	Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003)

Indicative questions for CX

CX dimensions	Questions	Notes
Peace-of-mind	PEA.1 I believe the employees of this cafe will continue to provide a welcoming atmosphere and excellent service.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Moments-of-truth	MOM1. Staff are flexible in accommodating my preferences and looks out for my needs.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM2. Employees in this cafe keep me informed and engaged with its offerings and updates.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM3. The staff in this store exhibit excellent customer service skills.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
	MOM4. The staff of this cafe deal(t) with me correctly when things go (went) wrong	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)
Outcome focus	OUT1. I receive what I need promptly when I visit this store.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)

	OUT2. The staff at this cafe can relate to my preferences and make me feel valued.	Adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2013)

Indicative questions for IMO

IMO dimensions	Questions	Notes
Intelligence generation: Identify value exchange	IVE1. One of this company's priorities is to understand the needs of its employees before any decisions are made	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE2. We make sure we meet our employees face to face so as to understand better their needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE3. In the company we regularly conduct studies to identify out employees' needs and expectations.	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IVE4. An important aspect of our work is to check whether our employees are satisfied with their job and to identify any problems they might have	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Intelligence generation: Internal market segmentation	IMS1. This company classifies its employees into well-defined groups according to their individual needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IMS2. When we draw up a particular policy or aim to implement it we always ask ourselves how it will affect the different segments of employees with similar needs and characteristics	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IMS3. All our employees are treated in exactly the same way, regardless of their needs and individual characteristics	Ruizalba et al. (2014) Reverse coded
Internal communication	IC1. Our supervisors are genuinely interested in listening to what employees have to say about their work, any problems they might have and the suggestions they put forward	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC2. If employees have a personal problem that has a negative effect on their performance, we encourage them to talk to their supervisor about it	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC3. The supervisors in the company are always available to meet personally with an employee if such a meeting is required	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	IC4. Supervisors are expected to spent time with employees, explaining to them the company's objectives and how these objectives affect company's expectations from each individual Employee	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Response to intelligence:	MC1. The managers of this company invest resources where needed in order to satisfy the specific needs or requirements of employees	Ruizalba et al. (2014)

Management concern	MC2. The needs of employees are taken seriously by company managers, and policies are developed with the aim of satisfying these needs	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC3. The management of this company is clearly geared toward solving any problems that employees may have and providing them with the support they need to perform their job well	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC4. Managers are genuinely interested in employees as people, regardless of how well they perform their job or the results they achieve	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	MC5. Managers are genuinely interested in hearing about and understanding their employees' feelings insofar as these affect their Work	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
Response to intelligence: Training	TR1. Prior to implementing a new service, or modifying an existing one, employees are given extensive training in relation to the change and how it will affect their way of working	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	TR2. This company systematically and continuously organises training seminars so that employees develop their skills	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	TR3. If employee is moved to a location or department, their new supervisor will personally provide training in relation to the new role	Ruizalba et al. (2014) Note: changed 'desk' to 'location' to for the cafe industry
Response to intelligence: Work/family balance	WFB1. Managers understand the family needs of their employees	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	WFB2. Managers support employees so that they can combine their work and family commitments	Ruizalba et al. (2014)
	WFB3. In this company, employees are able to find a balance between work and family life	Ruizalba et al. (2014)

Indicative questions for COSE

COSE dimensions	Questions	Notes
Technical skills	TS1. The employees of this cafe have a high level of knowledge	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	TS2. The staff here are experts in their job	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	TS3. The employees in this store are highly competent	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)

Social skills	SS1. The staff have extensive social skills	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	SS2. The employees in this cafe are able to consider my perspective	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	SS3. The staff in this cafe know how to treat a customer well	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
Motivation	M1. The staff show strong commitment to their job	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	M2. The employees here do their best to fulfil my needs	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	M3. The staff in this store are always highly motivated	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
Decision-making authority	DMA1. The employees here are allowed to decide autonomously in customer matters	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	DMA2. The staff have appropriate room for manoeuvre in solving my problems	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)
	DMA3. In the case of my requests, the staff here do not need to ask their supervisor for permission	Adapted from Hennig-Thurau (2004)

Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form

Hello,

Thank you very much for taking part in this study: Investigation of the Relationships between Internal Market Orientation, Customer Experience, and Customer Orientation of Service Employees

Confidentiality

The researchers will take the following steps to protect your identity during this study:

(1) Data Protection: All information collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential; (2) Anonymity of participants is guaranteed: no personal identifiers will be linked to your data. Your privacy and personal information will be protected in accordance with the data protection laws and regulations; (3) Data Handling: Only the research team members will have access to the collected data, and they are bound by strict confidentiality agreements. Data will be stored securely in the University system and will not be disclosed to any third party. The data will be deleted once the analysis is conducted. (4) Publication: Any findings or reports generated from this research will not include personally identifiable information. You will not be individually identifiable in any research outputs or publications.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the research team, your organization, or any other relevant party.

I have read and understand the information above, and want to participate in this study. If you click on "no", you will not be offered to take this study again.

- Yes
- No

For any question or clarification about this study you may contact the Principal Investigator Elizaveta Simakova at e.simakova@westminster.ac.uk

Thank you for considering participation in our study.

Appendix 5. Study 1 solutions (complex, parsimonious, and intermediate)

```
--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.819132
                                   raw       unique
                                 coverage   coverage   consistency
                                ---------- ---------- ----------
Cal_IC_2*Cal_WFB_2              0.791236   0.526041   0.812437
Cal_IVE_2*Cal_IC_2*~Cal_TR_2    0.304338   0.0391432  0.921027
solution coverage: 0.83038
solution consistency: 0.7991


**********************
*TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS*
**********************

File:  /Users/lisativol/Documents/IMO split conditions.csv
Model: Cal_COSE_2 = f(Cal_IVE_2, Cal_IC_2, Cal_TR_2, Cal_WFB_2)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.819132
                 raw       unique
               coverage   coverage   consistency
              ---------- ---------- ----------
Cal_IVE_2     0.761879   0.0619766  0.72634
Cal_WFB_2     0.864086   0.164184   0.761426
solution coverage: 0.926063
solution consistency: 0.704641


**********************
*TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS*
**********************

File:  /Users/lisativol/Documents/IMO split conditions.csv
Model: Cal_COSE_2 = f(Cal_IVE_2, Cal_IC_2, Cal_TR_2, Cal_WFB_2)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.819132
Assumptions:
                                   raw       unique
                                 coverage   coverage   consistency
                                ---------- ---------- ----------
Cal_IC_2*Cal_WFB_2              0.791236   0.526041   0.812437
Cal_IVE_2*Cal_IC_2*~Cal_TR_2    0.304338   0.0391432  0.921027
solution coverage: 0.83038
solution consistency: 0.7991
```

Appendix 6. Study 2 solutions (complex, parsimonious, and intermediate)

```
--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.962642
                          raw       unique
                        coverage    coverage    consistency
                       ----------  ----------  ----------
Cal_SS_2*Cal_M_2       0.838894    0.152398    0.963433
Cal_SS_2*Cal_DMA_2     0.715615    0.0291189   0.959848
solution coverage: 0.868013
solution consistency: 0.941274


**********************
*TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS*
**********************

File:  /Users/lisativol/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-UniversityofWestminster/PhD
Marketing/DATASETS/CX analysis.csv
Model: Cal_CX_2 = f(Cal_TS_2, Cal_SS_2, Cal_M_2, Cal_DMA_2)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.962642
                 raw       unique
               coverage    coverage    consistency
              ----------  ----------  ----------
Cal_M_2       0.878626    0.167637    0.922299
Cal_DMA_2     0.754259    0.0432699   0.900865
solution coverage: 0.921896
solution consistency: 0.874535


**********************
*TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS*
**********************

File:  /Users/lisativol/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-UniversityofWestminster/PhD
Marketing/DATASETS/CX analysis.csv
Model: Cal_CX_2 = f(Cal_TS_2, Cal_SS_2, Cal_M_2, Cal_DMA_2)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION ---
frequency cutoff: 1
consistency cutoff: 0.962642
Assumptions:
                          raw       unique
                        coverage    coverage    consistency
                       ----------  ----------  ----------
Cal_SS_2*Cal_M_2       0.838894    0.152398    0.963433
Cal_SS_2*Cal_DMA_2     0.715615    0.0291189   0.959848
solution coverage: 0.868013
solution consistency: 0.941274
```

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