

Reflections on Customers' Primary Role in Markets

Kristina Heinonen and Tore Strandvik

This is a post-print version (author's manuscript, peer reviewed) of the article: Heinonen, K. & Strandvik, T. (2017), Reflections on customers' primary role in markets, *European Management Journal*, 35, 1-11 available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2017.09.005>. Readers are asked to use the official publication in references.

Abstract

Technology developments have transformed the business landscape by accelerating connectivity, transparency and unpredictability. We argue that the most dramatic consequence is not the possibilities created for companies but rather the challenges that emerge as a result of customer behaviour undergoing fundamental changes. Technology transformation has paved the way for empowered customers who are increasingly influencing businesses and markets, and the challenge for practitioners and researchers alike is to make sense of the role of these customers in such business environments. These developments have yielded a need to revise companies' business models and to innovate new offerings. In scholarly research on marketing, this need has become evident and, beyond suggesting new concepts, completely new marketing management perspectives have been proposed, and each has its own core assumptions and focus. Broader views have emerged, and these stress the applicability of these perspectives not only to the top-level management of businesses but also to any non-commercial organisation.

In this article, we reflect on the customer-dominant logic (CDL) of marketing, which stresses the customer's primary role in business. As such, CDL differs from approaches that focus on the provider's perspective. The CDL approach is an expression of the research ideals and goals that are based on the Nordic School of Service Management. We argue that CDL is well aligned with emerging challenges in most markets, both established and nascent, and that it is more managerially relevant than many other perspectives. This is also in line with the recent calls for a soul of relevance for European management research (Chia, 2014; Hernes, 2014).

Keywords: marketing philosophy, managerial mindsets, customer-dominant logic; service management

1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that the business environment and markets in almost every industry are undergoing dramatic change. This change is largely due to increasing global competition, advancements in technology, for example, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, as well as the emergence of new markets, such as the sharing economy and peer-to-peer services. Technology developments have transformed the business landscape by

accelerating connectivity, transparency and unpredictability. As a result, institutional logics and established business models are being challenged. Companies are looking for recipes to enable them to overcome the decline of current business. Not only commercial or private markets but also the public and third sectors alike are being affected. These tendencies are rooted in the effect of technological innovations, which affect society in general, and customers and markets in particular. The power balance between providers and customers has changed in favour of the customers. Customers' behaviour has changed, as they increasingly have a choice regarding which providers to engage. Providers are, consequently, facing increased difficulties with regard to being seen, chosen and sustained as the customer's partner.

These dramatic changes to the fundamental characteristics of markets and business environments have precipitated an interest in creating new theoretical maps of the transformed terrain, as conventional theoretical models and concepts in marketing are on the verge of becoming obsolete. Scholars have, consequently, developed new perspectives, models and concepts to explain the new essential success factors in business. By analysing the changes occurring in various markets, we can identify two types of observations. The first is the observation of increased complexity and transparency, whereby customers become influenced by multiple sources and interactions, consequently leading to increased dynamism of business. The second observation is that customers are active subjects who are embedded in their own contexts and are subjectively striving to achieve their well-being goals. Both observations lead to changes in the established marketing perspectives that assume provider control, stability in markets, customers as targets and provider-led interactions. As businesses are facing increased dynamism and changes, there is a need for them to take an active and conscious stance with regard to the recent occurrences in the surrounding environment and to reflect on the value and relevance of their current business directions. This motivates them to seek further clarification of the underlying assumptions, characteristics and implications of the marketing perspectives that are used by the companies.

In this article, we reflect on the nascent marketing perspectives that build the foundation for the current marketing practices by primarily emphasising observation number two—customers as active subjects. Specifically, we discuss the changes in the business environment from the customer-dominant logic (CDL) perspective. CDL emerged as a European and specifically Nordic-marketing perspective that explicitly emphasises the primary role of the customer (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). It differs from the established American-marketing perspectives, which focus primarily on observation number one—the provider's logic. We view CDL as being in spirit aligned with Hernes' (2014, p. 852) argument that European management research needs a soul of relevance to address 'the localized, embedded, fluid and contingent nature of [the] managerial work' that is characteristic of today's business environment. Adopting a similar stance, Chia (2014, p. 688) calls for research that is 'imaginatively interesting and often counterintuitive: contributions that reveal opportunities for making fresh connections and reconfiguring relationships to produce important novel insights previously unthought or unthinkable". In the following reflections, we illustrate how CDL gives opportunities to both

researchers and practitioners to explore important marketing management issues in novel ways. In line with Chia's (2014) arguments, we believe that until the underlying logic is revealed, the CDL perspective may seem counterintuitive or even obvious to individuals who are accustomed to thinking in conventional ways.

First, we reflect on the significance of mindsets and paradigms in marketing management theory and practice. We conclude that, in general, mindsets deserve more attention in theoretical and practical contexts and that the more dynamic the business environment, the more critical the role of mindsets and paradigms becomes. Next, we reflect on the key concepts that are the fundamental building blocks of the CDL perspective. These concepts are stepping stones to novel and different insights into customers and markets. In the following section, we reflect on the practical implications of applying CDL. Finally, we specify the currently unresolved issues and research questions that arise from adherence to the CDL perspective.

CDL as a perspective is designed to be applicable to a range of contexts—for example, to commercial and non-commercial settings, consumer and business customers, single customers, and customers consisting of groups or collectives. Indeed, the assumption is that the notion of the customer is significant in most contemporary markets and constitutes the basis for all businesses and organisations. In commercial settings, there is no business without customers. In non-commercial settings, a similar argument is valid: Without users, beneficiaries or followers, no organisational activity can prevail. Therefore, from the provider's point of view, the most important factor in the market is the customer. Throughout the paper, we use the term "provider" when referring to the company or organisation that provides an offering to the customer.

2. Paradigms matter in management theory and practice

In recent decades, numerous marketing management paradigms have been introduced. Paradigms matter for both academic research and practitioners, although this is not always explicitly recognised. There are different marketing paradigms in academic research, and they often use similar concepts but apply different meanings to them. Different paradigms also have different goals and purposes, which drive their focus and scope. The concepts that are used in a specific paradigm usually represent a coherent whole, which is driven by the basic assumptions of the paradigm. Different marketing paradigms use different sets of core concepts and definitions, thereby creating specific lenses through which situations are seen and determinations are made regarding what needs to be done. The dilemma arising from the existence of multiple marketing paradigms is that foundational assumptions are not always recognised and considered.

Strandvik and Heinonen (2015) and Strandvik (2013) position and contrast some of the current marketing management paradigms in a framework (Figure 1) that emphasises the fundamental differences between the perspectives. The managerial focus and managerial scope separate the paradigms from each other and capture essential elements of value creation. *Focus* refers to where the emphasis is placed when designing and implementing

strategies and offerings. Over time, focus has gradually shifted from a provider focus to an interaction focus and, more recently, to a customer focus. Managerial *scope* refers to how broadly the offering and its context are considered based on the paradigm. Over time, the scope has expanded from being focused on a transactional exchange to focusing on the relationship between the provider and the customer and, further on, to adopting the view that what is offered is a part of a system. Figure 1 represents a map of how marketing paradigms have emerged and changed over time based on the two dimensions.

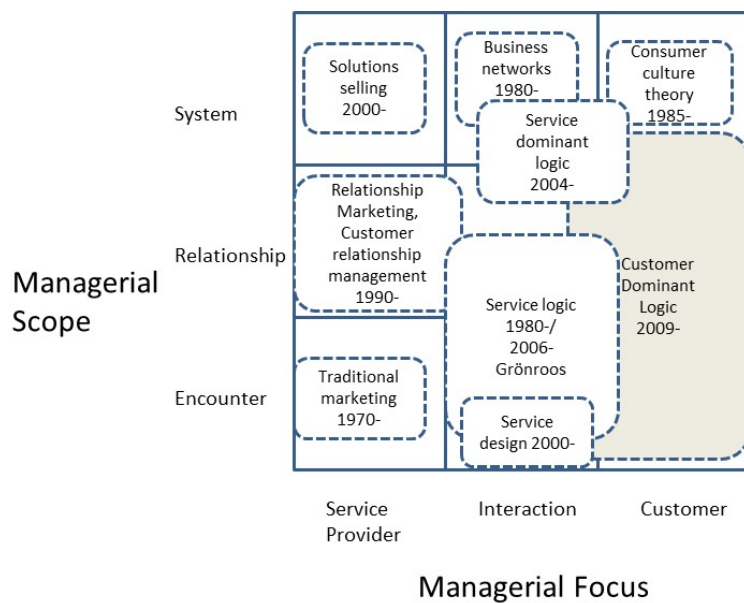


Figure 1. Different marketing perspectives (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2015)

In scholarly research, each marketing paradigm tends to develop a set of its own core concepts or redefinitions of established concepts to represent its essential features. In management practice, such distinctions are not always made explicit, and the assimilation of new perspectives is challenging. Typically, in many traditional industries, institutionalised mindsets, which are similar to paradigms among researchers, are not only deeply rooted in reasoning and actions but also reflected in organisational structures and patterns of cooperation with other organisations (Strandvik et al., 2014). Therefore, a change in mindset that eventually results in implementations in practice is a long process, starting with reflection on the current mindset (Holmlund et al., 2017). The development of new marketing perspectives is driven by changes in the society and business environment at large. Companies that discover that traditional business models and offerings are not sufficient request innovations and new ideas to enable them to survive and prosper. In this context, academic theorising flourishes and alternative perspectives are created.

The marketing paradigms that have evolved since the 1970s are traditionally represented by a *provider* focus and a transactional scope. Numerous practitioners consider this the way in which marketing management should be conducted. Based on this mode of thinking, marketing is primarily seen as marketing communication, which is handled by an organisation's Marketing Department, and it is considered to be an expense (Grönroos, 1982). The offering is a designed product that contains the value to be exchanged. Customers are seen as targets to be activated and controlled by the provider, and the main concern for providers is to differentiate themselves from their direct competitors. According to this common mindset, marketing has very little influence on strategic decisions and top-level management concerns.

The development of service management research in the 1980s led to a stronger focus on the interaction with the customer (Grönroos, 1982). On the basis of the service management paradigm, the main consideration is what the service provider does in the decisive *interaction* or moment of truth—that is, the service encounter with the customer. The more recent service design literature has continued to place a strong emphasis on interactions in terms of designing customer journeys with multiple touchpoints along different channels. Customers are recognised as merely participants in interactions that are designed and controlled by the provider. In contrast to the provider and the interaction focus, researchers have recently suggested that *customers* should be given the primary role in business (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). In practice, CDL means that instead of thinking in terms of how customers can be involved in the provider's activities, the interest should be in how customers prefer to involve providers in their lives or business activities. This is seemingly trivial; however, in practice, a crucial shift in focus has manifold implications, as will be discussed in this paper.

The managerial scope of marketing has also developed from its roots in the service encounter to also encompass the *relationships* that a provider has with its customers. In particular, the proponents of customer relationship management in the 1990s emphasised the importance of managing the relationship between the customers and marketing managers, for example, by focusing on assessing the lifetime value of different customer segments. The relationship became the offering. More recently, researchers and marketing managers have been interested in further extending the offering from a single product or service to a *system* of elements that represent a provider-designed solution. Such solutions might even be based on combining elements from different providers in a system. In the marketing literature, this development materialised in the 2000s through the increasing attention to service solutions (Nordin & Kowalkowski, 2010). Systems thinking is also increasingly seen in the service-dominant logic, based upon which the attention is on service processes within systems of service. The service-dominant logic has similarities with the industrial marketing and purchasing paradigm, which is focused on business networks. Systems thinking is also apparent in the consumer culture theory, which emphasises the importance of consumer collectives.

One of the more recently introduced marketing approaches is the CDL perspective on business (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen et al., 2013; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015;

Strandvik & Heinonen, 2015). The central ideas of CDL were triggered by discussions about the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and service logic (Grönroos, 2006). CDL and its conceptual underpinnings emerged within the European tradition of research that allows and supports diversity rather than conformity. It builds on the research tradition of the Nordic School of Service Management, which is based on conceptual research and abductive theory generation.¹ New theory generation and in-depth conceptual understanding through the questioning of underlying assumptions drive the Nordic School research interests. Indeed, Gummesson and Grönroos (2012) argue that 'Conceptual work and thinking out-of-the-box are key characteristics of the Nordic School. Research is not constrained by mainstream norms regarding what marketing is or what makes research scientific' (p. 490). Today, the Nordic School is an open community of researchers who challenge common understandings and advance original ideas. It has been influential in developing the field of service research, and it is where CDL has its roots.

CDL is grounded in the current dynamic business context. Although much of what is causing the changes and increased dynamics in markets is related to technology, the real challenge for companies and organisations does not come from technological advancements but from how customers' behaviour changes, as well as market situations and competition, take new shapes. Therefore, CDL as a marketing perspective directly addresses the core challenges that are arising in many markets. In line with Strandvik et al. (2014), CDL considers marketing a foundation for business, in contrast to the common view of marketing as a mere function of it. CDL as a marketing and business perspective is, therefore, based on the notion of customers' logic and how companies' offerings become embedded in customers' lives/business. The concept 'customer logic' reflects customers' reasoning and sense making about appropriate methods of achieving goals and conducting tasks. The term 'dominant' refers to the customer's dominant role in the company. As such, applying CDL means allowing the business to be dominated by customer-related aspects, instead of prioritising other factors, such as products, service, costs or growth.

In the following section, we discuss the foundational premises of CDL that represent expressions of the perspective, and we provide tools to enable understanding of customers in a manner that differs from other marketing perspectives.

3. Foundational premises of CDL

In his call for European management scholarship, Chia (2014) suggests that researchers should engage in intellectual entrepreneurship by employing the 'art of revelation/revelation'. Revelation involves relaxing pre-existing conceptual constraints for researchers to be able to see the unnoticed, overlooked or unattended. Revelation is proposed to depict that management issues that were previously invisible, hidden or latent

¹The edited book [The Nordic School: Service Marketing and Management for the Future](#) (Gummerus & von Koskull, 2015) is a unique compilation of research within the Nordic School tradition.

are, in fact, fundamentally related and important. Chia believes that this strategy will lead to counterintuitive findings and insights that are otherwise unthought and unthinkable. Following the spirit of Chia's suggestion, we describe how CDL reveals new aspects of marketing management. We do this by focusing on the following concepts: customer, customer logic, customer activities, customer ecosystem and value formation.

Paradoxically, although it is self-evident that there is no business without customers, the customer concept in itself is seldom problematised. Defining and scrutinising the customer concept in depth enables new insights. The customer ecosystem represents the context for customer activities that are driven by the customer's logic. Each of these concepts is related to how value is created for the customer through the use of products and services. The term value formation is used in CDL to indicate that value emerges from a process rather than being deliberately created in a planned way. Customers are driven by goals, aspirations, dreams and visions. By the same token, there are issues and situations that they strive to avoid or change. Therefore, it is not only the question of determined tasks that drives the customer but also, based on a rather holistic perspective, a mix of structured and emergent processes that influences the customers' choice of providers and their value formation. CDL's ambition is to reveal such factors in contrast to conventional perspectives, in which customers are seen either as objects of business and marketing activities or as generic actors among other actors.

3.1. Customer focus instead of provider focus

The focus of CDL is on the primacy of the customer and customer roles. The notion of the 'customer' does not imply that only consumers are the focus. We argue that all companies and other public, governmental and not-for-profit organisations have customers, although this label is not used; rather, client, user, citizen or similar terms are adopted. In the same sense, all companies and organisations have 'markets' that need to be identified and served. The concept 'customer' indicates the role of being a customer in markets and may refer to any unit acting as a customer, whether it is a consumer (single person), a collective of consumers (a family or a group of people), a company or any type of organisation or a group of them, a region or a country. The main issue is the emphasis on *the unit making choices regarding what to acquire/purchase to achieve its own goals*.

The customer unit that is selected should be relevant to the situation. For example, in consumer markets, it is not self-evident that the customer is a single person—a consumer. Rather, the customer may be a family or a group of consumers acting collectively, such as when families as customers make decisions based on their shared identity goals (Epp & Price, 2011). Similarly, in business-to-business markets, the relevant customer definition may not be the customer company, but rather a department of a company or a group of individuals within a company. An example is the business customer that evaluates value as an individual and a collective (Macdonald, Kleinaltenkamp, & Wilson, 2016). Another issue is how different roles related to being a customer are conceived. Is the customer role the decision-maker, the payer, the user, the influencer, and so on? If not all roles are integrated, who the customer is depends on what factors are relevant to the situation.

In contrast to some other perspectives, CDL argues that it is essential to differentiate between provider and customer roles, although in some cases, these roles can be intertwined. For example, the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2017) has adopted a systemic view of actors in the marketplace and contends that different types of actors should not be distinguished from each other but that providers and customers should generically be seen as actors. However, we argue that such a view is managerially and societally inadequate, as the driver of business dynamics and the value of sustainable markets are based on the choices made by customers. Instead of focusing on how service systems are arranged, the main emphasis should be on what constitutes the customer ecosystem.

CDL is applicable on different levels, from single providers of products and services to complex configurations of providers. For example, CDL has been used to design a city's approach to build a comprehensive smart service infrastructure to integrate public and private services to serve its citizens more effectively and at a lower cost. CDL could, for example, be used to inform providers of refugee services or to design customer-dominant healthcare systems. In marketing management, it is a question not only of attending to current customers but also of reflecting on potential customers. Markets are continuously evolving, thereby leading to a need to understand the dynamics of customers coming, staying and going, as well as the reasons for these changes.

In different marketing paradigms, customers are assigned different roles in terms of their position in relation to the provider. Commonly, the notion 'customer orientation' entails considering customers as objects who are seen in the light of the provider, and the provider is seen as enacting the primary role. Customer orientation is, in practice, related to collecting information about customers based on what the provider finds relevant to develop its offerings and improve its operations. By contrast, CDL assumes that business success is based on understanding which role a provider might have in the customer's life world and being able to fulfil it in a profitable way. Customer dominance—that is, emphasising the primary role of customers—is, thus, different from customer orientation. According to CDL, the key point is not collecting data about customer needs, wants and expectations regarding offerings, but rather understanding how customers as subjects compose their lives and use offerings according to their logic. Thus, the key factor becomes the holistic logic that customers apply to fulfil their goals, and discovering potential latent gaps and changes in their current configuration represents a business opportunity.

3.2. Customer logic instead of provider logic

A key factor of CDL is the concept that all customers act logically, based on their own goals, aspirations, tasks, resources, experiences and reasoning. Customers are, thus, assumed to be subjectively rational, and they follow an idiosyncratic logic. This customer logic is a 'coordinating concept in which the patterns of customers' overt and covert activities, experiences and goals are integrated' (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015, p. 475). It is assumed

that actions and decisions that might seem irrational from the outside are not but, rather, can be explained by customers to represent a way of reasoning that makes sense for the customer when considering all influencing factors. We assume that the customers' logic is semi-stable, that it is fixed but not unchangeable, and that they apply to specific customers in certain situations and contexts at particular times. Customer logic can be seen as representing the *identity of the customer*. The customer's perceptions of providers are influenced by the former's logic. A large but not infinite number of customer logics can be expected in any market. Theoretically, there can be as many logics as there are customers, and for practical reasons, it is reasonable for customer logic to be clustered and grouped into a fairly small number.

This holistic assumption regarding how customers' preferences are influenced differs from that of many other marketing perspectives. Generally, different purchases and customer relationships are seen as independent of each other and related only to the provider or to the situation in question. By viewing customers holistically means focusing on how their different activities, experiences and resources are linked to each other, thereby forming a system of their own.

3.3. Customer activities instead of interactions

Interaction as a perspective and a core concept has played a significant role in service management and business-to-business marketing. Service management is largely focused on interactions. 'Interaction' has been defined as 'a physical, virtual, or mental contact, such that the provider creates opportunities to engage with its customers' experiences and practices and thereby influences their flow and outcomes' (Grönroos & Voima, 2013, p. 140). Despite its central role in marketing, the notion of 'interaction' has seldom been problematised. The concept has been implicitly and explicitly stretched beyond the literal meaning of interaction as a 'mutual or reciprocal action or influence' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Almost any contact point between the service provider and the customer has, however, becomes labelled as an interaction. We argue that this stretching of the concept is detrimental to understanding the nature of different service situations and potentially misleads service providers, who design and manage services. Strategically, service management involves much more than merely managing interactions with customers.

From a customer perspective, there are numerous important activities other than what they do in their interactions with providers. For this reason, we argue that the focus should be on customer activities and how providers participate in these activities and tasks. There are three levels of customer activities in a customer's domain: core activities, related activities and other activities (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen et al., 2015). To understand a customer holistically, all three levels need to be considered. Some customer activities may involve direct interactions with the service provider, but contrary to the provider's point of view, interactions with the provider are not important for the customer. More important are the core activities and experiences that are directly connected to the use of the service.

Also, other activities representing actions outside the scope of the service are central and they can involve, for example, communication and sharing between the customer (units).

3.4. Customer ecosystem instead of service system

It has been argued that different forms of ecosystems are strategically important for firms in their brand management, promotion planning, market analysis and strategic decision-making in general (Dass & Kumar, 2014). In the service management discipline, there is a growing interest in and emphasis on ecosystems and systemic aspects of businesses. This is in contrast to the traditional focus on service dyads comprising a single company and customer (Fisk, Brown, & Bitner, 1993). The emphasis is on the system of structures and processes within a service provider's organisation (Kingman-Brundage et al., 1995; Normann, 1986). Another view of service systems is on the network between corporate actors (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995) emphasising the aggregate system level and the network but not separate corporate actors. Either the service provider's view of service systems or an aggregate view has predominantly been taken. Research is currently moving towards emphasising the macro-level aspects of businesses, and the focus is, for example, on how multiple different actors provide service systems (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). This increasing emphasis on systems, such as product ecosystems (Dass & Kumar, 2014), service delivery networks (Tax, McCutcheon, & Wilkinson, 2013), network offerings (Moeller et al., 2013) and service (eco)systems (Akaka, Vargo, & Lush, 2013) results in a stronger focus on generic actors, consequently losing sight of the customer. Hence, CDL suggests that customer ecosystems should be focused on.

A customer ecosystem is defined as a system of actors related to the customer that is relevant to a specific service (Heinonen, Strandvik, & Voima, 2013). Activities, practices and experiences emerge within the ecosystem, but the general structure is the configuration of the actors. Actors other than persons may also belong to the ecosystem—for example, different service providers in the same industry, service providers from other industries and other customers. A customer ecosystem is different from a service system. It has been argued that customers represent specific positions in a service system: 'positions that are designed for the customer within the service provider's system, and the roles that the customer is willing and able to take within the provider's social system' (Edvardsson et al., 2011). In contrast, within the customer ecosystem, the position of the customer refers not to the position in the service provider's system but to the position that customers take in their own ecosystem in relation to other actors (e.g. family and friends) as part of his or her social system. The customer's ecosystem represents a constantly changing influencer that affects his or her activities and service experiences. Value is, thus, not created in the provider's service (eco)system; instead, it is experientially formed in the customer's ecosystem.

3.5. Value formation instead of value co-creation

Another distinctive and dividing factor between different marketing perspectives is what we label the *nexus of value creation*. The value nexus refers to the central and focal point of value creation. In Figure 2, the change in nexus and focus over time is depicted as being represented in different theoretical marketing management perspectives. This change can be explained as a reflection of changes in markets and business environments.

Value focus

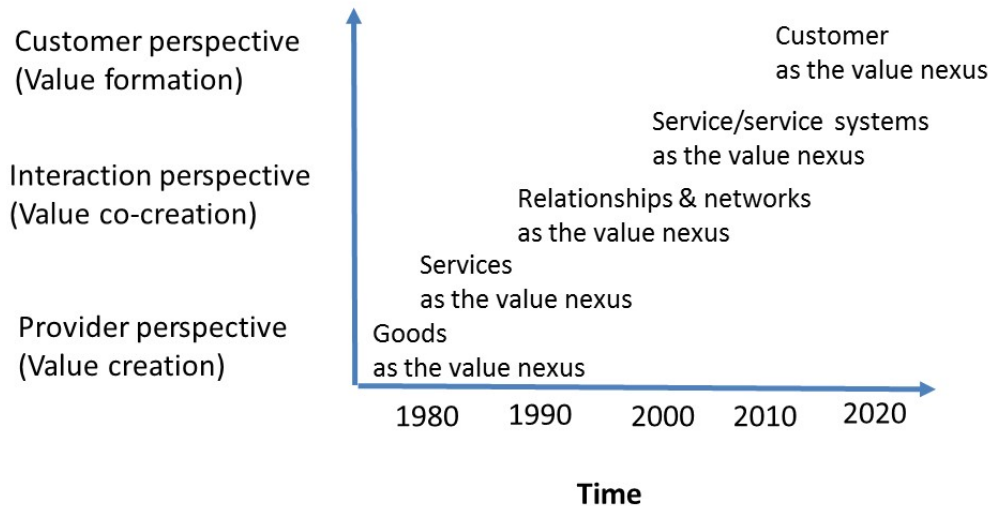


Figure 2. The evolution of value nexus

Value has traditionally been described as being created by the provider in terms of the value in exchange. On the basis of this view, the goods that were exchanged were in focus. Value was seen as mainly controlled by the service provider and was defined as *value creation*. In the 1980s, in the early days of service management research, interactions with customers were introduced as a differentiating factor compared to the marketing of products (Grönroos, 1982). Value was depicted as ‘perceived service value’, essentially accounting for customer experiences and interpretations of the provided service beyond how it was designed and delivered by the provider. Later, it was suggested that any company could be considered a service company and could achieve success by applying a process view that was based on interactions (Grönroos, 1982). In current service management research, interactions and contact points between the provider and the customers are generally assumed to be loci for value creation. Managers are increasingly paying attention to contact points that extend beyond the core service encounters by also recognising the customer journey (Richardson, 2010; Rosenbaum & Otalora, 2017) and the extended value creation process (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010). Value is thought to be created in these contact points and is defined as *value co-creation*. The position of interaction as a bedrock concept has been reinforced by the introduction of the concept ‘co-creation of value’. For example, according to the service-dominant logic, co-creation is axiomatically assumed to be the foundation for value creation. The intention is to account for multiple influences affecting value creation based on a systems view. However, underlying this

reasoning is a collaborative consensus on the relationships between providers and customers. Providers and customers are assumed to have common and mutual interests in value co-creation.

In contrast, CDL approaches value from the customer's point of view and challenges the current assumptions that value is created in interactions only and that a single provider or a service system has a dominant role in value formation. In CDL, the expression *value formation* as a reflection of the value in use is used to denote that value is continuously emerging when an offering is used either mentally or physically in the customer's context. Value is the customer's subjective interpretation, which can change dynamically. The opposite view is represented in conventional (goods-dominant) thinking, in which value is considered to be contained in the designed product. Moreover, CDL does not make an assumption that value is harmoniously created in interactions. Instead, the approach indicates that there may be diverging and conflicting interests, even leading to the 'politics of value creation' (Laamanen, 2016). From a CDL perspective, deliberate co-creation is a special case of value formation (Grönroos, Strandvik, & Heinonen, 2015), and hence, value is not always co-created.

Such a problematisation has far-reaching consequences. We suggest studying the emergence of customers' value in use and extending beyond interactions to also consider customer actions and reactions, as well as the novel concept 'presence' (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). Presence shifts the focus from value formed in interactions only to a broader view of how the provider can be present in customers' value in use. Physical presence represents one aspect of the customer's perception of the availability and relevance of a provider's service. This typically neglected factor is a precondition for potential value formation. Another aspect is mental presence, which is the customer's perception of the provider's engagement with the customer. It affects the customer's choice of provider and, hence, influences value formation. Furthermore, CDL argues that offerings may be purchased and used when availability to use is value creating (e.g. goods acquired just in case they will be needed) or value formation is continuous without interactions (e.g. utilities or insurance services). These situations are all captured by the presence concept, but not by interaction.

A generic framework for analysing value formation from a CDL perspective involves five questions that need to be answered: What is value based on? How is value formed? When is value formed? Where is value formed? and Who determines value? (Heinonen et al., 2013). Based on CDL, value formation is only partly visible to the provider and takes place partially outside of the control zone of the provider (Heinonen et al., 2013). According to Heinonen et al. (2010), there are three reasons for this. First, value formation is partly invisible because value may also emerge before and after the service interactions and, hence, is not related only to the interactive process. Second, value emerges in the customer's own contexts and practices, which may differ from the provider's specifications and understanding of contexts. Furthermore, value in use also emerges in the customer's non-interactive processes and includes mental activity. Third, earlier experiences are always present in, and influence, customer's value formation but are invisible to the provider.

4. Managerial implications of applying CDL

In the following section, we analyse how CDL informs managers of commercial and non-commercial organisations regarding how to succeed in their endeavours.

4.1. Importance of managerial mindsets

Undeniably, in regard to achieving business success, managerial mindsets play a crucial role in how customers are considered. Mindsets determine what managers pay attention to and decide to do. In his seminal book, Normann (2001), for example, argued that the map (mindset) held by the manager determines the business landscape that he or she sees. For example, in the context of social media, Rydén, Ringberg and Wilke (2015) identified four typical managerial mindsets—described as business-to-customers, business-from-customers, business-with-customers and business-for-customers—which result in completely different views of the role of customers.

When companies encounter increasingly dynamic business environments, there is a potential risk that mindsets, perspectives and concepts developed as maps of stable business conditions are no longer relevant or are even misleading. Changing perspectives, thus, result in the need to critically scrutinise the roots and relevance of the concepts and mindsets in use. Essentially, any established concept should be problematised to discover whether new insights can be achieved by thinking differently. It is evident, however, that changing or even identifying the current mindset, which is often institutionalised, is not easy (Holmlund et al., 2017). It has even been suggested that academic research is most impactful when it affects managers' mental models and mindsets (Jaworski, 2011). Managers' mindsets may not correspond exactly with the purified academic marketing paradigms but are in principle related. This is why reflections on the role of customers in today's business may inspire changes in managers' mindsets both individually and collectively.

4.2. Marketing as a business philosophy

The emergence of new marketing paradigms has changed the role and position of marketing in the way in which companies are organised towards a more strategic and holistic approach to marketing. CDL as a perspective underlines such a change and implies a radical transformation of managerial mindsets. From this perspective, it is the customer—not the company itself or its offering—that should be the focus. CDL represents a holistic managerial mindset that should be applied at the highest level of organisations (Strandvik et al., 2015).

Shifting the focus in this way requires a change in the provider's mindset. Marketing is not to be considered a function but a business philosophy. A conceptual response in the business literature has been to focus on service as a generic offering, whereby any company

can be considered a service company. The assertion that business should be seen as (service) systems does not take into consideration the customer's freedom of choice of providers. How individual providers choose to design their business models and offerings to achieve their own goals should, however, be based on insights into customers' perspectives and aspirations.

A customer's perspective also reveals the artificial division of marketing activities, which is present in practice and in research on, for example, branding, customer relationship management, sales, service management, advertising and social marketing. With regard to research, these aspects have developed into streams of their own, and in organisations, it is common to see them as separate functions. For a customer, however, all activities tend to merge into one impression of the provider and, furthermore, include the past experiences (Rindell, 2013; Rindell & Strandvik, 2010).

4.3. Contrasting logics

Considering single customers in a holistic way means assuming that every customer—whether a single consumer, a group of consumers, a company, a group of organisations or any other unit—thinks, feels, acts and reacts in a subjectively logical way by either consciously or unconsciously considering the entire customer context. In practice, this means that any purchase or customer relationship might be related to several aspects of the customer's life or business. Consumers are living their lives, and business customers strive to succeed holistically in their businesses. The most important managerial task is to understand this customer totality to craft a suitable business model for the provider. By contrast, traditionally, the customer is considered to act atomistically and acontextually by following 'rational logic', which often equates to the provider's logic. Hence, any purchase or relationship is depicted as separate, with few or no connections to other features of the customer's totality.

A key implication resulting from viewing customers holistically is the recognition of the customer's logic. From a provider's point of view, the notion of customer logic represents a widening of the scope and a contextualisation of what might have traditionally been seen as specific 'needs' and 'wants'. Customer logic is anchored in customer activities, resources, experiences, tasks, goals, aspirations and dreams, all of which are systemically interrelated and manifested in the current constellation of products and services that are used by the customer. From a managerial point of view, a key challenge is, thus, to identify and understand customer logic, as it explains the customer's actions, reactions and experiences.

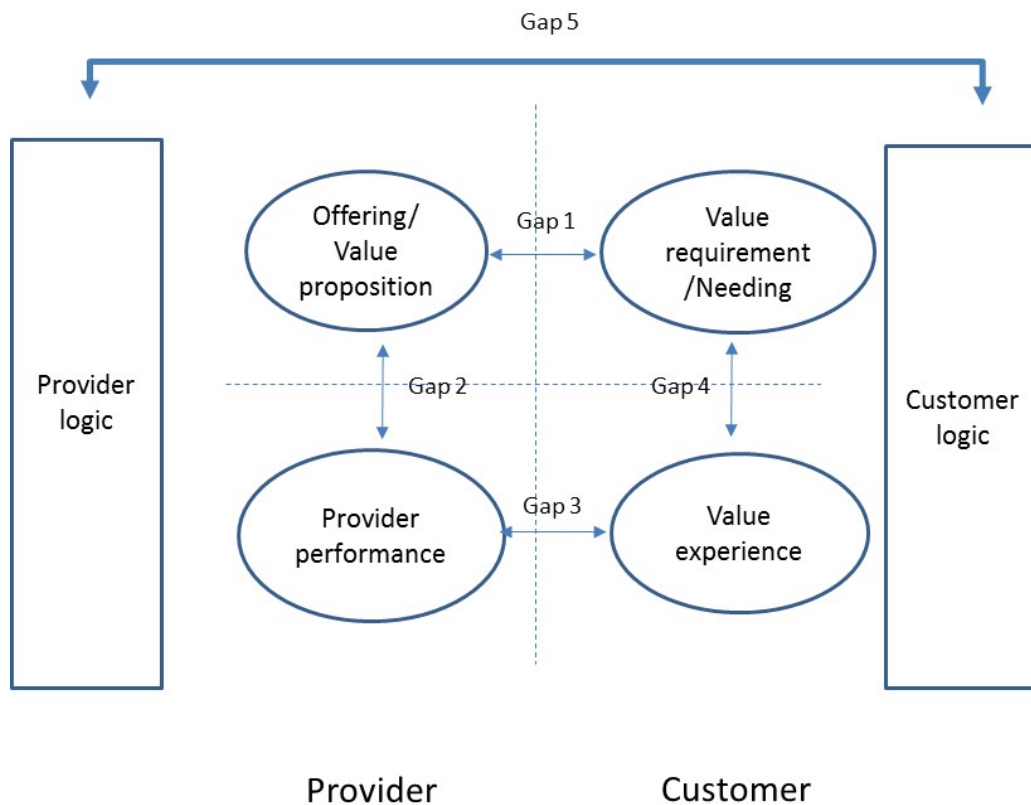


Figure 3. Provider and customer logic as contrasting value perspectives

In Figure 3, the issue of different logic steering the value formation of the provider and the customer is explained. CDL argues that the provider and the customer are operating within their respective logic, and there are several differences between them. These differences in logic, as indicated by the gaps in the model, need to be recognised. Gaps 1 to 4 represent core management issues and are indicated in the model between customers' value requirements or needing (Strandvik et al., 2012) and value experiences on the one hand and providers' designed value propositions and actual performance on the other hand. The roots of these gaps are, however, the overall differences in logic between the provider and the customer, as indicated by gap 5.

Providers have a logic of their own, which is materialised in the company's business model (Teece, 2010), offerings and operations. The provider logic informs the provider to make choices in terms of defining its *offerings*, which, according to some perspectives, denote a value proposition. In practice, this means that cost, profitability and efficiency issues drive the provider to design offerings that represent a specified package of elements and activities. Companies need to focus on specific business models and design offerings and develop operations and organisational solutions to provide these offerings in an efficient and profitable way that leaves little room for operative adaptation to customers' divergent logic. Optimally, there would be unlimited flexibility in processes, and the provider and the customer would be free to co-create value without restrictions. However, in reality, this is seldom the case, and for the provider, this represents a challenge, as indicated by gap 1. Furthermore, the customer's interpretation of the offering is relative to its alternatives and

is based on multiple influences over time. Similarly, gap 3 represents the difference between the customer's perceptions of *provider performance* and the provider's actual performance. The customer's *value experience* is a managerial challenge to understand, as simple methods that are frequently used, such as customer satisfaction surveys, do not provide sufficient information to managers about what has created the experience. In reality, the consumer's experience is only partially based on the provider's performance, in contrast to what is commonly assumed. Moreover, there is often a difference between the promised offering and provider performance, as the provider might not be able to consistently fulfil what has been promised (as indicated by gap 2). Understanding the consistency between the customers' requirement and their experience (gap 4) can be challenging for the service provider because it is out of the latter's sight and control. In essence, the gap refers to the process that determines whether the customer will use the provider (again).

In dynamic markets, institutionalised business models, current offerings and modes of operation are contested, and innovations are called for. CDL argues that the key to creating relevant innovations and forming new markets in practice is to analyse the potential for finding customers for the offerings that do not exist and envisioning markets that could be formed. However, the key is not to ask customers to directly define new innovative offerings but rather to understand customer logic in evolving settings. Customer logic determines the *value requirement* and preferences, as well as how the customer experiences the value in using the offerings that are provided. A lack of customer insight might lead to a situation in which the provider knows what it is selling but does not understand what the customer is, in fact, buying (Strandvik et al., 2012; Strandvik & Holmlund, 2015). Consequently, CDL argues that, in practice, providers need to not only understand current customer logic but also grasp how it is changing.

4.4. The fallacy of provider control

In practice, marketing mindsets may be rooted in implicit provider-oriented perspectives. For the manager, theoretical approaches are seldom considered important in reality; rather, the accepted focus is on costs, profitability and the lack of resources and time. It is commonly thought that companies should differentiate themselves and their offerings from their competitors' to achieve success in the marketplace. Stable markets give the illusion that companies can control and even 'own' their customers. A hidden assumption in many marketing paradigms is that the provider generally has considerable influence on the customer's perceptions, experiences and actions, but this view is becoming less prevalent. If this assumption does not hold, it has profound consequences for provider actions. In contrast, CDL does not assume that the provider has a significant influence on the customer due to its own activities, as well as its strategies to build brands, create experiences and manage relationships. Rather, determining what matters to customers and the extent of the provider's influence has become an important area of inquiry.

As discussed, the change in focus and scope of marketing as an academic discipline has created fundamentally different perspectives on how to achieve success. We argue that instead of assuming control and influence, such explicit or implicit assumptions should be critically re-evaluated.

Another similar implicit assumption of marketing is the misleading focus on harmony and positive outcomes. Generally, the assumption is that collaboration is, or normatively should be, the underlying mode of conduct for providers and customers. This is, for example, assumed in the emphasis on value co-creation (Ranjan & Read, 2016). CDL takes a different approach and suggests that providers and customers have conflicting motives, logic and activities with regard to achieving their own goals. Indeed, the co-creation of value is only a special case of value formation for the provider and the customer (Grönroos et al., 2015).

There is also an implicit overemphasis on positive outcomes—for example, the interest in positive experiences, satisfaction, strong engagement and brand love. From a practical point of view, companies have, to a large extent, to tackle bad experiences, dissatisfaction, low engagement and brand indifference or avoidance (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Rindell et al., 2013). Conversely, by adopting the customer perspective, we suggest that it is useful to direct attention to the issue of negative and indifferent manifestations, which can be done for, example, by taking a portfolio approach to customers' connections to providers (Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013).

4.5. The challenge of changes in the business environment

Technological developments represent a major driving force in reshaping society and the business environment both directly and indirectly. For example, mobile and wearable technology, automation, machine learning, virtual reality and artificial intelligence are cutting-edge innovations with potential business applications. Researchers and managers are interested in how increasing connectivity and employing the Internet of Everything can be used for business purposes. However, the technological transformation has also paved the way for empowered customers who are increasingly active in markets and who not only cooperate with companies on their own terms but also drive their own interests individually and collectively. Examples of such activities are customer-driven innovation, crowdsourcing, user-generated content and social networking. A provider perspective might overrate the business potential of technological advancements if it does not give sufficient consideration to the fact that, ultimately, potential customers have to accept the technology and recognise its value in use in their own contexts. Furthermore, in principle, the same technology is available to competitors, which means that the crucial issue is alignment with customer requirements. CDL thus emphasises the importance of understanding the customer's perspective on the use of technological solutions.

Moreover, researchers and practitioners have speculated that big data will revolutionise business opportunities. CDL, however, takes a more critical approach. Big data are, in principle, equally available to any provider, and the data are useless unless interpreted and organised according to a clear framework or logic. Collecting information about customers

has always been considered important, but it is not about having data; rather, it is about the interpretation and use of these data and information. Data are meaningful only when organised into a framework. In a data-rich business context, the customer's logic is still the driving force, and from a practical perspective, it is, therefore, essential to focus on *big logic*. Big logic represents a focus on understanding the mindsets and driving forces of providers and customers. With CDL as a guiding principle, it can be argued that big logic can even be achieved by using small data—for example, by applying an abductive research methodology to conduct small, in-depth studies of customers in an effort to understand their logic.

5. Agenda for future research based on the CDL philosophy

The theoretical underpinnings of the CDL approach are based on identifying and questioning assumptions. Therefore, the approach represents a powerful perspective for identifying new directions in terms of research in service and marketing management. In this respect, CDL is similar to Alvesson and Sandberg's (2011) suggestion about problematisation, which is based on challenging the prevailing foundational assumptions and, thereby, generating new insights. As Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) explained, the common research practice is based on gap-spotting to create research questions, and this approach tends to reinforce rather than challenge influential theories. For example, most marketing theories explicitly or implicitly assume that companies can control, or have a significant influence on, their customers. When business environments and service settings are undergoing significant changes, it seems worthwhile to explore alternative views on business. For example, the service-dominant logic is one approach to change the focus on marketing, and CDL represents another. Each perspective is based on different basic assumptions. What if the assumption of provider control is challenged? What if customers are, to a large extent, driven by factors other than the efforts of a particular provider or a network of providers? It is here that the overarching contributions from CDL are most definitive by considering customers to be in charge and emphasising their primary role. Future research questions that result from this basic assumption of customer primacy include the following:

Who is the customer? What is the relevant customer unit from the customer's perspective? For example, from the customer's point of view, the seemingly single individual customer may, in fact, be a family, a collective of individuals, or an organisation. The customer unit may be permanent or temporary, and it may be harmonious or tension-filled. How does the notion of the 'customer' function in a third-sector context, such as non-governmental organisations, public service or non-commercial brand communities?

How can customer logic be characterised and differentiated? Taking a holistic perspective, it is not sufficient to study isolated needs, wants and expectations concerning specific offerings; rather, it is important to understand how the customer's holistic reasoning defines his or her value requirements and, even more importantly, which providers are considered eligible. What role does emotion play in influencing the customer's logic?

What influence does the customer's ecosystem have on what is purchased, used and experienced? If the customer's ecosystem represents the essential context for explaining

customer behaviour, it contrasts with the view that provider-dominant service systems are the driving factor. A part of the customer ecosystem is a customer's current constellation of the providers and offerings used.

What role do customer activities have in explaining customers' preferences for providers and offerings, and how are customer activities connected? The activities that customers engage in are relevant in determining how they experience different offerings and providers. Value in use involves different, sometimes connected, activities and they are both physical and mental (Heinonen, Strandvik & Voima 2013). It is important to understand how customers involve providers and utilise their offerings in their activities. These questions contrast with current service theories that focus on how providers involve customers in their activities.

How do customers' tasks and goals affect their choice of providers and offerings? Beyond the present, customers' goals, aspirations and dreams affect these choices both in the present and in the future. In general, these aspects are not considered in service theorising because the focus has been restricted to the here-and-now context that is perceived by the provider.

How do customers relate to service providers in terms of attachment and connection, be it positive, indifferent or negative? The normative ideal in theorising has been to focus on (extremely) positive connections, while in practice, most connections are indifferent or sometimes even negative (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). This aspect is also related to the collaborative assumption that providers and customers in general have (or should have) common interests in value creation. This paves the way for studies that adopt a conflicting perspective. What would the implications be if the focus were on providers' and customers' diverging interests where they engage in the politics of value creation (Laamanen, 2017)?

How can companies gain holistic insight into customers' logic, ecosystems and activities when this has not been the tradition? There is a need for diverse research approaches for understanding customers. The key questions relate to the role of qualitative and quantitative studies in facilitating providers' understanding of customer logic, and how effective studies should be designed.

What are the current drivers of change in customer behaviour? Traditionally, the focus has been on deterministic structures and attributes rather than on emerging processes. For example, most of the concepts capturing customer perceptions—such as customer satisfaction, experience, trust, commitment, engagement, value and quality—are implicitly assumed to be stable. However, in practice, these perceptions are dynamic. In an increasingly dynamic business environment, it is becoming more crucial to study the changes in these perceptions rather than the current status. In addition, focusing on the diversity of perceptions, in contrast to aggregate descriptors, might provide more insight.

There is a completely different set of research questions related to managerial mindsets and how customers are considered in business models, strategies, innovation processes, service design and the organisational structure.

6. Conclusion

We argue that in the context of increased dynamism, mindsets and perspectives matter more than ever before. This applies to different actors in markets and society, as well as to researchers who are creating 'maps' of the changing terrain. CDL has been presented as a perspective to facilitate analysis and understanding of why individuals and organisations become customers and why they do not. Although the term customer is rooted in business thinking, the ideas are applicable to any situation in which a provider serves an audience for some purpose, whether it is commercial or non-commercial, a private or a public service, a political movement, or for social and altruistic causes. In contrast to other perspectives that focus on the provider or the systems of actors, CDL gives the head actor role to the customer. CDL highlights customers' embeddedness in their own contexts. Although context plays a role, the focus is on the idiosyncratic aspect of customers and not on what is common among customers. This is based on the assumption that individuals in dynamic environments get opportunities to be individualistic and, hence, increase the dynamism and change in markets. Empowered customers choose which providers they engage; therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for providers to be chosen. We argue that providers need to understand customers holistically by considering the drivers and restrictions of each individual customer. The customer's individual, subjective logic might be different from the provider's logic. Value is formed when using an offering, but it is not self-evident what use means; rather, it is one of the core issues to be explored both by researchers theoretically and by practitioners in their contexts. More importantly, the assumption that provider logic and customer logic differ highlights the main difference between CDL and other perspectives and reveals challenges that might otherwise be neglected.

On an aggregate market and societal level, customer logic becomes influential when a critical mass of customers adopts a certain view on an issue. For example, the acceptance and support of certain societal and ethical concerns have forced politicians and businesses to respond to these concerns and have led to considerable changes in companies' strategies and offerings. Increased connectivity, transparency and unpredictability have enabled the empowerment of citizens and customers. We argue that customer logic is the expression of what matters to the customer in both the present and the future. Potential markets for political and commercial ideas and innovations are, therefore, dependent on the dynamics of customer logic. For example, Anker (2017) reflected on the idea that Brexit was the result of a feeling among United Kingdom voters that they had lost their sense of being in touch with European Union politicians, which resulted in a feeling of social injustice. As a consequence, they reacted, using the democratic means available to regain control. Although Anker (2017) did not make the connection, this can be seen as a particular type of customer logic that explains the reactions of the citizens. There is an increasing need for politicians and political parties (providers) to better understand empowered voters' logic, which might not follow political provider logic. Social media has changed the dynamics of the political markets in the same way that business markets have been affected.

Acknowledgement

Kristina Heinonen wishes to thank the Hanken Support Foundation for supporting this research.

References

- Akaka, M. A., Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2013). The complexity of context: A service ecosystems approach for international marketing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 21(4), 1–20.
- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 247–271.
- Anker, T. B. (2017). Corporate democratic nation-building: Reflections on the constructive role of businesses in fostering global democracy. *European Management Journal*, 35(1), 1–7.
- Chia, R. (2014). Reflections on the distinctiveness of European management scholarship. *European Management Journal*, 32 (5), 683–688.
- Dass, M., & Kumar, S. (2014). Bringing product and consumer ecosystems to the strategic forefront. *Business Horizons*, 57(2), 225–234.
- Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll, B., & Gruber, T. (2011). Expanding understanding of service exchange and value co-creation: A social construction approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(2), 327–339.
- Epp, A. M., & Price, L. L. (2011). Designing solutions around customer network identity goals. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(2), 36–54.
- Fisk, R. P., Brown, S. W., & Bitner, M. J. (1993). Tracking the evolution of the services marketing literature. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(1), 61–103.
- Fournier, S., & Alvarez, C. (2013). Relating badly to brands. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 23(2), 253–264.
- Grönroos, C. (1982). An applied service marketing theory. *European Journal of Marketing*, 16(7), 30–41.
- Grönroos, C. (2006). Adopting a service logic for marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 6(3), 317–333.
- Grönroos, C., Strandvik, T., & Heinonen, K. (2015). Value co-creation: Critical reflections. In J. Gummerus & C. von Koskull (Eds.), *The Nordic School: Service marketing and management for the future* (pp. 69–81). Helsinki, Finland: Centre for Relationship Marketing and Service Management, Hanken School of Economics.
- Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 133–150.

- Gummerus, J., & von Koskull, C. (2015). *The Nordic School: Service marketing and management for the future*. Helsinki, Finland: Centre for Relationship Marketing and Service Management, Hanken School of Economics.
- Gummesson, E., & Grönroos, C. (2012). The emergence of the new service marketing: Nordic School perspectives. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(4), 479–497.
- Heinonen, K., & Strandvik, T. (2015). Customer-dominant logic: Foundations and implications. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(6/7), 472–484.
- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, K.-J., Edvardsson, B., Sundström, E., & Andersson, P. (2010). A customer-dominant logic of service. *Journal of Service Management*, 21(4), 531–548.
- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., & Voima, P. (2013). Customer dominant value formation in service. *European Business Review*, 25(2), 104–123.
- Hernes, T. (2014). In search of a soul of relevance for European management research. *European Management Journal*, 32, 852–857.
- Holmlund, M., Strandvik, T., & Lähteenmäki, I. (2017). Digitalization challenging institutional logics: Top executive sensemaking of service business change. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, 27(1), 219–236.
- Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (1995). *Developing relationships in business markets*. London: International Thompson.
- Jaworski, B. J. (2011). On managerial relevance. *Journal of Marketing*, 75, 211–224.
- Kingman-Brundage, J., George, W. R., & Bowen, D. E. (1995). Service logic: Achieving service system integration. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 6(4), 20–39.
- Laamanen, M. (2017). The politics of value creation. *Economics and Society: Publications of the Hanken School of Economics*, 309.
- Macdonald, E. K., Kleinaltenkamp, M., & Wilson, H. N. (2016). How business customers judge solutions: Solution quality and value in use. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(3), 96–120.
- Moeller, S., Ciuchita, R., Mahr, D., Odekerken-Schröder, G., & Fassnacht, M. (2013). Uncovering collaborative value creation patterns and establishing corresponding customer roles. *Journal of Service Research*, 16(4), 471–487.
- Nordin, F. & Kowalkowski, C. (2010). Solutions offerings: A critical review and reconceptualization. *Journal of Service Management*, 21(4), 441–459.
- Normann, R. (1986). *Service management*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Normann, R. (2001). *Reframing business: When the map changes the landscape*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

- Richardson, A. (2010). Using customer journey maps to improve customer experience. *Harvard Business Review*, 15(1).
- Rindell, A. (2013). Time in corporate images: Introducing image heritage and image-in-use. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(2), 197–213.
- Rindell, A., & Strandvik, T. (2010). Corporate brand evolution: Corporate brand images evolving in consumers' everyday life. *European Business Review*, 22(3), 276–286.
- Rindell, A., Strandvik, T., & Wilen, K. (2013). Ethical consumers' brand avoidance. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(7), 484–490.
- Rosenbaum, M. S., Otalora, M. L., & Ramírez, G. C. (2017). How to create a realistic customer journey map. *Business Horizons*, 60(1), 143–150.
- Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. (2011). Grasping the logic of practice theorizing through practical rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 338–360.
- Strandvik, T. (2013). Volume introduction: Service logic—An introduction to Christian Grönroos's contribution to service logic. In *Legends in marketing: Christian Grönroos. (Vol. 3)*. Series editor J. N. Sheth, volume editor T. Strandvik, SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, India.
- Strandvik, T., & Heinonen, K. (2013). Diagnosing service brand strength: Customer brand experience portfolios. *Journal of Service Management*, 24(5), 502–519.
- Strandvik, T., & Heinonen, K. (2015). Essentials of customer dominant logic. In J. Gummerus & C. von Koskull (Eds.), *The Nordic School: Service marketing and management for the future* (pp. 111–127). Helsinki, Finland: CERS, Hanken School of Economics.
- Strandvik, T., & Holmlund, M. (2015). We might know what we are selling but do we know what the customer is buying? In J. Gummerus & C. von Koskull (Eds.), *The Nordic School: Service marketing and management for the future* (pp. 205–218). Helsinki, Finland: CERS, Hanken School of Economics.
- Strandvik, T., Holmlund, M., & Edvardsson, B. (2012). Customer needing: A challenge for the seller offering. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 27(2), 132–141.
- Strandvik, T., Holmlund-Rytkönen, M., & Grönroos, C. (2014). The mental footprint of marketing in the boardroom. *Journal of Service Management*, 25(2), 241–252.
- Tax, S. S., McCutcheon, D., & Wilkinson, I. F. (2013). The service delivery network (SDN): A customer-centric perspective of the customer journey. *Journal of Service Research*, 16(4), 454–470.
- Teece, D. (2010). Business models, business planning and strategy. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 172–194.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of marketing*, 68(1), 1–17.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2017). Service-dominant logic 2025. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 46–67.