

The Practicality Pillar of the Phyigital Customer Experience: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to explore the 'practicality' pillar of the Phyigital Customer Experience (PH-CX) framework, which refers to the functional benefits consumers receive from their shopping experiences in online and offline settings. The primary objective is to identify the key dimensions of this pillar and their impact on the value delivered to consumers. **Design/methodology/approach** – The study leverages a systematic literature review (SRL) methodology, analyzing a selection of relevant articles from the SCOPUS database. The selection process culminated in a final set of 78 articles focusing on phyigital innovation in management and marketing scientific field. **Findings** – The study reveals three core dimensions of the 'practicality' pillar within the PH-CX framework: 'omni-channel integration', 'synergistic design', and 'adaptive innovation'. Each of these dimensions contribute to the overall PH-CX, enhancing the consumer journey, ensuring seamless integration across all touchpoints, and supporting adaptability in changing market conditions. **Research limitations/implications** – The research is limited to articles from the SCOPUS database and primarily focuses on the 'practicality' pillar. Future studies could expand the review to include additional databases and explore the remaining pillars of the PH-CX framework. **Originality/value** – The research provides valuable insights into phyigital innovation for both academics and practitioners, offering an in-depth understanding of the 'practicality' pillar that can guide strategies to enhance customer experience and maximize consumer value across various industries.

Keywords: Phyigital Customer Experience, practicality, omni-channel integration, synergistic design, adaptive innovation, systematic literature review.

Introduction

The PH-CX framework, blending the physical and digital aspects of customer experience, focuses on six main pillars: practicality, sociability, immersivity, technicality, sensoriality, and affectivity (Batat, 2022). Building upon the continual investigation into the PH-CX framework's pillars, our research aims to delve deeper into the 'practicality' pillar. This refers to the functional benefits, specifically addressing the consumers' tangible need for quality, that consumers derive from their shopping experiences in both online and offline environments (Batat, 2022). We seek to answer the research question: 'What are the key dimensions of the 'practicality' pillar within the PH-CX framework, and how do they influence the value delivered to consumers?'. To address this question, our study utilizes a SLR methodology, enabling an in-depth exploration of existing literature with a specific focus on articles about phyigital innovation in the management and marketing scientific fields. This approach led to the identification of three principal dimensions of the 'practicality' pillar within the PH-CX framework: 'omni-channel integration', 'synergistic design', and 'adaptive innovation'. Our study aims to provide valuable insights for academics interested in further research on phyigital innovation, and practitioners across industries like healthcare, retail,

banking, travel, and education, who can leverage these insights to improve their customer experience strategies, thereby maximizing consumer value.

METHODOLOGY

A SLR was conducted to identify and define the key dimensions of the ‘practicality’ pillar of the PH-CX. SLRs provide a scientific and rigorous method of reviewing and synthesizing findings from existing literature (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Planning – A preliminary analysis was conducted to identify the research topic and determine relevant keywords for article selection. A review protocol was then designed and agreed upon by all researchers.

Execution - During this stage, we conducted an extensive search for pertinent articles and book chapters. SCOPUS, identified as the most effective database, was utilized for undertaking a SLR (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). This search, utilizing "phygital" as the keyword, focused on English language documents, with the search parameter encompassing the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the documents. No restrictions were placed on the publication year, resulting in a final selection of documents published between 2014 and 2023. The search strategy, which abstained from the use of Boolean modifiers, yielded an initial pool of 95 publications as of August 31, 2023. A two-phase screening process was employed. The first phase involved an evaluation of titles and abstracts to exclude any documents not primarily addressing phygital innovation. In the second phase, a thorough perusal of the full text of the remaining documents was performed, with those not pertaining to the scientific fields of management and marketing being discarded. This process resulted in a final set of 78 articles suitable for detailed analysis.

Evaluation - The abstracts and titles of the documents were screened initially using a content analysis to identify those primarily focusing on ‘phygital innovation’. A first thematic analysis was then employed to categorize the selected articles based on emerging themes in the field of management and marketing. Lastly, a second targeted thematic analysis was conducted on the articles emphasizing the functional aspect of the PH-CX, to identify the specific dimensions of the ‘practicality’ pillar (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Results

Quantitative analysis

The range of publication dates for articles relating to our chosen topic extends from 2014 to August 31, 2023. Initially, our search yielded 95 potential papers for evaluation. Upon completion of two screenings, 78 articles were found to be relevant and selected for an extensive analysis. The annual distribution of these articles was heavily weighted towards the most recent years: 36 articles in 2023, 23 articles in 2022, and 17 articles in 2021. Notably, our search criteria were not met by any papers published in 2015 or 2016. The majority of these articles were published in five primary journals: ‘Journal Of Strategic Marketing’, ‘Journal Of Retailing And Consumer Services’, ‘Sustainability Switzerland’, ‘Developments In Marketing Science Proceedings Of The Academy Of Marketing Science’, and ‘International Journal Of

Retail And Distribution Management'. Among the 78 articles we reviewed, 30 were based on conceptual research, while the remaining 48 were empirical studies.

Qualitative analysis

Our qualitative research identified three main dimensions: 'omni-channel integration'; 'synergistic design'; 'adaptive innovation'.

'Omni-channel integration' involves seamless integration across digital and physical channels. This dimension is about the coherence of customer interactions, whether online or offline, and the integration of various touchpoints. A clear example is evident in the luxury fashion industry's omnichannel strategy. The integrated approach ensures a seamless customer experience across all touchpoints, offering consistency whether the customer is shopping online, in-store, or through mobile apps (Pangarkar et al., 2022). Another example is in retail, where digital technologies optimize interactions with offline channels through pop-up stores (Mikheev et al., 2021), and banking services that provide omni-channel experiences that are seamless and unified across all touch points, i.e., it is possible for a customer to do virtually every single banking operation right out of the palm of one's hand from a smartphone or tablet (Santosh, 2019). Furthermore, the travel industry uses digital tools to enhance the travel experience by providing for example spontaneous access to trip information (Mieli, 2023). In all these sectors, the 'omni-channel integration' enhances consumer value by seamlessly blending digital and physical channels, thereby smoothing the customer journey. This phygital integration not only fosters customer loyalty, as it provides a streamlined and convenient experience across all touchpoints, but also provides businesses with a more holistic view of their customers' behaviour and preferences, thereby allowing for more personalized and effective engagement strategies.

'Synergistic design' revolves around integrating digital technology into physical environments, thus creating a cohesive, enriching user experience. The overall quality and value derived from these experiences are based on the seamless integration of digital touchpoints into physical ones, enhancing consumer value. For instance, mixed-reality game platforms for children, designed using Human-Centered Design (HCD), have emerged in response to the increase in sedentary behavior. These platforms employ digital tracking modules within the physical world, ensuring a smooth, intuitive operation of the game (Lupetti et al., 2018). The integration of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies into physical touristic spaces provides another excellent example of 'synergistic design'. Customers can visualize destination-related content through these digital technologies, leading to enriched, user-friendly experiences (Neuburger et al., 2018). In the healthcare sector, the use of a remote consultation mobile unit (UMT) leverages digital technology to provide teleconsultation services, improving the physical patient experience at home, and potentially reducing viral transmissions (Sténou et al., 2022). By employing 'synergistic design', businesses can significantly enhance their offerings, making their products more responsive and user-friendly, adding substantial value to the consumer experience.

The third dimension, 'adaptive innovation', of the 'practicality' pillar of the PH-CX is about the longevity and resilience of the phygital strategy in the face of change. Phygital

technology, by diversifying customer outreach through physical and digital channels, enables businesses to swiftly adapt to changes, a key aspect in today's rapidly shifting market conditions (Del Vecchio et al., 2023). The adoption of hybrid classrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates how functionality extends to include sustained support and cyber safety (Mourtzis et al., 2022). This dimension heightens consumer value by assuring businesses maintain relevance and meet customer expectations in changing market conditions, underlining the resilience and longevity of phygital strategies.

Each of these dimensions are distinct but co-dependent aspects of the 'practicality' pillar of the PH-CX. Their co-dependency becomes evident as they synergistically augment the overall customer journey, guarantee a seamless integration across all platforms and touchpoints, and adjust adeptly to the evolving trends and changes in the ever-dynamic marketplace, therefore maximizing consumer value and business resilience.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Directions

Our study, through a comprehensive review of 78 articles, shed light on the 'practicality' pillar of the PH-CX framework, identifying three key dimensions. 'Omni-channel integration' emphasizes seamless customer interactions across different touchpoints, fostering customer loyalty and offering businesses a comprehensive understanding of their customer base. 'Synergistic design' emphasizes the interconnectedness of digital and physical environments, creating holistic experiences that significantly augment consumer value. 'Adaptive innovation' underscores the longevity and adaptability of phygital strategies in rapidly shifting markets, thus maintaining business relevance and meeting evolving customer expectations. Our findings not only contribute to academic discussions around the PH-CX framework, but also provide practitioners with insights to enhance their strategies and stay relevant in a dynamic marketplace.

Limitations and Future Directions: Upcoming studies might benefit from the inclusion of articles from other databases to potentially extract more diverse insights. Moreover, further research into the other pillars is necessary for a holistic understanding of the PH-CX framework.

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