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For the love of experience: changing the experience economy discourse

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CHAPTER 1

The most difficult subjects
can be explained to the most
slow-witted man if he has not
formed any idea of them already;
but the simplest thing cannot
be made clear to the most
intelligent man if he is firmly
persuaded that he knows already,
without a shadow of doubt,
what is laid before him.

LEO TOLSTOY,
THE KINGDOM OF GOD,
1894

Research outline

1.1 Introduction and research objective

What do education on autism[1], a website for jeans[2], tents on a camping site[3], gift vouchers for bungee jumping[4], funeral services[5], a dinner in a hot air balloon[6], a car showroom[7], an MRI scanner for children[8], mascara[9] and a venue for cooking workshops[10] have in common?

The answer to this question is that these are some examples of what nowadays is called an 'experience'.

In the last decade the term 'experience' has proliferated in areas as diverse as marketing, design, hospitality, education, architecture, tourism, human-computer interaction, retail, museums, healthcare, landscaping and travel, and this list is expanding all the time. What the uses of the term experience in these diverse areas have in common is that attention is growing for the role of the customer. This development has been termed the emergence of the 'Experience Economy' in a Harvard Business Review article in 1998, by Joseph Pine II and Jim Gilmore. "As

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1 Multimedia theatre 'Het Hoofdkwartier' (http://www.rocvantwente.nl/ROC-Voorpagina/ROC-Nieuws/kennismaken-met-belevingswereld-autist)

2 Jeans.com, the ultimate jeans experience (http://www.jeans.com/)

3 Safaritent of Eurocamp (http://camping.eurocamp.nl/Deorganisatie/Persberichten/PersberichtMetEurocampopsafariinEuropa/tabid/1085/Default.aspx)

4 Total Experience gifts vouchers (http://www.totalexperience.com.au/)

5 Brandexperience in funeral industry (Rust zacht, plakje cake (Rest in peace, piece of cake) (Enklaar, 2008))

6 CuliAir Hot Air Balloon Restaurant (http://www.culiair.nl)

7 Peugeot Experience (http://www.peugeot.nl/peugeot-experience/)

8 Philips' Panorama scanner in an ambient suite (http://www.healthcare.philips.com/phpwc/main/shared/assets/documents/about/events/2009/ecr/pdf/mr/mr_panorama_hfo_pediatrics.pdf)

9 Max Factor Xperience volumising mascara (http://www.maxfactor.nl/nl/products/eyes/mascara/xperience/detail.aspx)

10 Miele Inspirience Centre (https://www1.miele.nl/MIC/Pages/default.aspx)

goods and services become commoditized, the customer experiences that companies create will matter most" (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 97) (see figure 1.1).

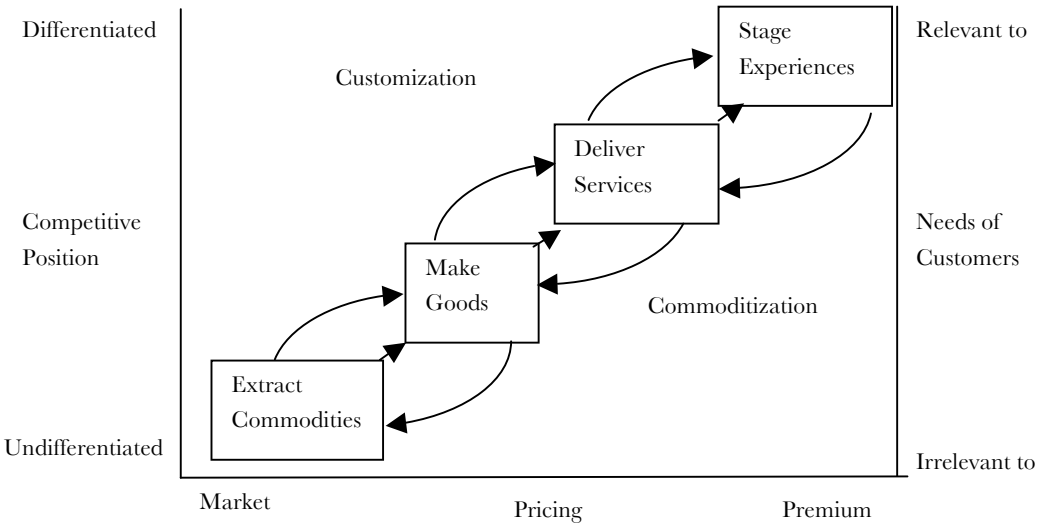


Figure 1.1 – Progression of Value (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.72)

Based on the argument that goods and services have become or are rapidly becoming commoditized, Pine and Gilmore claim that companies need to focus more on the customer and offer experiences as distinct economic offerings to be able to differentiate themselves from the competition. The raison d'être of the experience economy is then the need to decommoditize economic offerings, hereby maintaining or increasing profit margins and making sure that customers choose economic offerings not solely based on price.

Attention for decommoditization and the customer's role in interactions with companies already increased when the economy shifted from an industrial economy to a service economy. In the industrial economy organizations offered utility to a customer, who paid money in return. In the service economy on the other hand, the offering to the customer did not consist of mere utility anymore, but also of the process of service delivery. In return, attention was not merely paid to the price of the

service, but also to other costs of acquiring the service, like the time and effort it takes to acquire the service. In the experience economy companies have to do even more. They have to create or 'stage' memorable experiences and evoke emotions in their customers, and allegedly the customer will pay more money for these experiences. Two famous examples of this progression of value are shown in table 1.1.

BIRTHDAY CAKE EXAMPLE				
Economic offerings	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences
	Making birthday cakes from scratch, mixing farm commodities (flour, sugar, butter, and eggs)	Betty Crocker premixed ingredients	Ordered cakes from the bakery or grocery store	"Outsource" the entire event to Chuck E. Cheese's, the Discovery Zone, the Mining Company, or some other business
Price	Mere dimes	Dollar or two	$10 or $15	$100 or more
COFFEE EXAMPLE				
Economic offerings	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences
	The coffee bean	Manufacturer grinds, packages and sells the same beans in a grocery store	Brew the beans in a diner, coffee-shop, bodega	Five-star restaurant, espresso bar
Price	One or two cents a cup	Between 5 and 25 cents a cup	50 cents to a dollar per cup	$2-$5 per cup

Table 1.1 – Examples of progression of value towards experience economy (based on Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p.97; 1999, p.1)

The increased attention for the customer can not only be recognized in theories referring to experiences, but is also alluded to in literature in which the emergence of a dream society, an attention economy, an empathy economy, an entertainment economy and an emotion economy is described (e.g. Jensen, 1999; Davenport & Beck, 2001; Nussbaum, 2005; Wolf, 1999; Maes & Parson, 2000), but in the end one can

recognize the growing attention for the customer's role as a result of the risk of commoditization as a basic principle of all these concepts.
Although attention for experiences has increased enormously in the last decade, the idea that the customer and how he or she experiences things is a very important aspect of consumption has existed for much longer. The sociologist Gerhard Schulze wrote his book 'Die Erlebnisgesellschaft', German for 'the experience society', in 1992. In this book he argues that current society is more and more focused on experience and he describes what he calls 'Erlebnis Rationalität' (experience rationality), the growing focus of people on adapting their environment to be able to have more or more intense experiences. In 1982, Hirschman and Holbrook wrote an article on hedonic consumption, or "the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982, p. 92), in which they argued that the traditional, more utilitarian, perspective on consumer behaviour was not sufficient anymore to explain how and why people consume what they do. In 1976, MacCannell's book The Tourist was published, in which he described how contemporary tourists are on the continuous search for touristic experiences. Toffler's book Future Shock, published in 1970, contains an entire chapter titled 'The Experience Makers' which discusses the rise of whole industries that are dedicated to the production of experiences for people. In 1964 Daniel Boorstin, in his book 'The Image', described at length what the consequences for individuals and society have been of the fact that we think we can fabricate and market experiences. And even as early as in 1959, Levy described the way in which consumption should be considered as a symbolic process because of the growing recognition of the importance of the customer in this process.

Although there exists a vast amount of articles and books on this development and although the attention for experiences in the economy can be traced back to more than 50 years ago, the experience economy is still theoretically ill-founded. Besides this, there is also a strong bias in the experience economy discourse as I will explain.

One of the reasons for the current bias in the experience economy discourse is that scholars in the fields of marketing and business appear to only look at a part of what experience is. Based on an overview of definitions of the term experience in chapter 2, I argue that experiences in general, not just experiences as economic offerings, per definition consist of three essential interrelated elements: something in the

environment that is experienced, an individual who experiences and an encounter of the individual and his or her environment. One problem of the current experience economy discourse in the fields of marketing and business is that scholars often seem to focus on mainly one of these three essential elements. Since a focus on one of the elements means that one is approaching experience from a specific angle, I want to argue that there are three approaches that can be distinguished in the current discourse.

One approach is focused on the 'experienced being', or 'what' it is that is experienced in the individual's environment, for example events, activities, occurrences, things, and so on. I have named this approach the environment-centred approach. The second approach is focused more on the 'experiencer', and the effects that he or she experiences, hence I have called this approach the effect-centred approach. The third approach is focused on the characteristics of the encounter of the individual and his or her environment. This approach is called the encounter-centred approach. A review of current literature on the experience economy in chapter 2 shows that scholars in the fields of marketing and business usually focus on one of these three specific elements and therefore take a specific approach as their basis. This bias does not necessarily lead to problems if one consciously makes a specific choice for a specific element and approach, and is aware of the consequences of this choice. However, given the theoretically ill-founded nature of the subject, one may doubt whether this choice is always made intentionally. One first has to be aware that there is in fact a bias in one's perspective, but after this recognition one can deal with it. "Fortunately for serious minds, a bias recognized is a bias sterilized" (Taylor, 1855).

Although the choice for one approach or the other may have unintended consequences, this still does not fully explain my argument that the current bias in the experience economy discourse is problematic. An additional problem is that even within the specific approaches marketing and business scholars take a limiting and quite objectivist view. Scholars usually theorize about the experience economy from an organizational perspective. The assumption that decommoditization is the main reason for the emergence of an experience economy, can clearly be recognized in the current experience economy discourse. This causes a search for new ways to add value to economic offerings, so that one can differentiate one's offerings from those of

the competition. Since the assumption seems to be that it is always the organization that has to add value to the economic offerings, the organizational perspective is highly dominant in current literature. To balance the experience economy discourse one should also take into account the individual's perspective. The individual plays a decisive role in experiences and if this role is neglected by taking solely the organizational perspective, organizations run the risk of not offering experiences to their customers but mere adapted goods and services.

In the environment-centred approach for instance, the view of what is experienced according to marketing and business scholars is often restricted to treating experiences as if they are products or environments with objective qualities that can be produced and managed. The objectivist perspective can be recognized in this approach in many ways. Experiences are staged, produced, sold, managed etc., as if they are separate objects in the individual's environment. In the effect-centred approach, the marketing and business scholars' focus lies mainly on how hedonic effects can or should be invoked and managed. Also here one can notice a clear objectivist perspective, since the effects, be they for example emotions, feelings or moods, are dealt with as if they are entities separate from the individual that can be given or sold to him or her. Thirdly, the role of the individual in the encounter-centred approach in marketing and business literature is primarily restricted to the investment of money. The encounter is often described as a transaction between an organization that functions as 'experience-provider' and a customer, in which the organization gives something of value to the customer and the customer gives something of value, usually money, in return. The way in which these 'somethings-of-value' are discussed resembles a discussion of objects, separate from the organization and separate from the individual, that are transacted. Again one can recognize the objectivist perspective. In the discussion of the three approaches the objectivist perspective will be explained in more detail.

The bias in the experience economy discourse thus not only refers to scholars focusing on one of the three elements of experiences by taking a specific approach to the subject, but even within a specific approach in literature usually a quite objectivistic view is taken on only one conceptualization or effect or value that is selected and discussed. In figure 1.2 the bias in the experience discourse is depicted by illustrating

how usually the choice for one approach of experience, and within that approach for one objectivistic aspect, results in a very restricted focus on what experience entails.

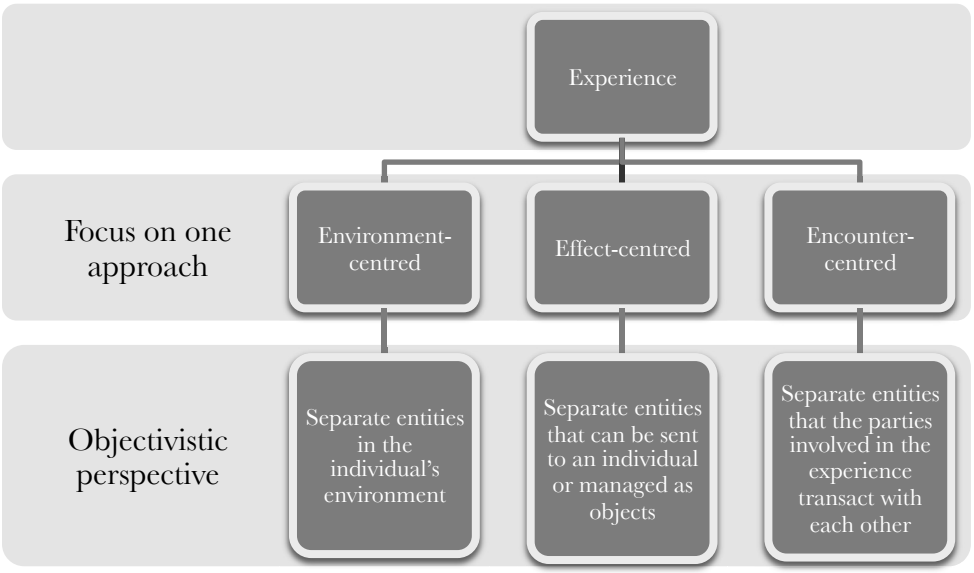


Figure 1.2 – The objectivistic perspective within the three approaches of experience

Again, the focus on just one aspect of one approach does not have to pose a problem for marketing and business scholars, as long as they are aware of the fact that they are discussing only a part of what experience entails. But without a clear overview of what experience is and means, of the complete experience economy discourse, one runs the risk of thinking that one has covered the whole subject, potentially resulting in inappropriate choices related to the three elements of experience.

This brings me to the statement of the objective of my research:

The objective of my research is to offset the current bias in the experience economy discourse, by constructing a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective.

The construction of a sound theoretical foundation for the experience economy helps to see which options are available to choose from when one needs to choose a specific focus. However, the objectivistic focus on separate entities is always problematic, since the objectivistic perspective is not a useful perspective when trying to gain insight into experiences. Knowledge according to objectivists should "adequately describe some objective reality" (Jonassen, 1991, p. 7). However, experiences are not parts of 'some objective reality' but constructions in a social reality as I intend to make clear in this research, and knowledge of experience will therefore not come about based on the same principles that are used for studying the 'objective reality' of objectivists. Where objectivists believe that they can gain knowledge on the world by adhering to the principles of positivism, I consider these principles not useful for constructing a sound theoretical foundation for the experience economy. As Lee (1991) states: "people, and the physical and social artifacts that they create, are fundamentally different from the physical reality examined by natural science" (p. 347). People attach meanings to what they experience and these meanings may vary from one person to the other. In this sense, the way knowledge can be gained on experience is via interpretation of the meanings individuals attach to their experience. For gaining this knowledge one cannot rely on the same principles of positivism that are used for natural science, but one needs different principles. To construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy I will therefore explicitly take into account knowledge on experience derived from disciplines outside of the fields of marketing and business, which adhere more to interpretivistic principles.

By constructing a theoretical overview of experience solely based on existing literature, I will not yet have attained my goal of offsetting the current bias in the experience economy discourse. Assuming that I would have, would mean making the mistake of discussing the subject from an outside point of view without taking into account the actual individual's experience. The personal nature of experience requires one to try to approximate the perspective of individuals themselves. They are the only ones who truly know what they have experienced, the experts on their own experience. I therefore have chosen to interview 15 individuals who have had a 'free choice learning experience'. The analysis of these so-called existential-phenomenological interviews, in which the interviewees are in fact treated as the experts, renders insight into the main themes that the interviewees themselves deem important in the context

of their experience. By combining these insights with the insights that were derived from the presented literature on experience, I not only attain my objective of offsetting the current bias in the experience economy discourse, by constructing a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy, but I also attain my objective of constructing this theoretical foundation from the individual's perspective.

1.2 Research questions

To attain my research objective presented in paragraph 1.1, I will need to answer several research questions. Since the theoretical foundation that I intend to construct in this research will not be the first theory that has been constructed for the experience economy, I will first answer the question "What is the current state of affairs regarding theory on the experience economy?"

Based on an analysis of a varied range of definitions and theories of experience I distinguish three elements that are essential for an experience to exist and three related approaches of experience: the environment-, effect-, and encounter-centred approaches. I will explain what these approaches of experience entail and what their respective foci are. I will also describe and explain the bias I argue that each respective approach by itself suffers from and the gaps in knowledge caused by this bias in chapter 2. The way that business and marketing scholars have so far theorized about experiences, based on the assumption that the reason for the emergence of the experience economy is the risk of commoditization of economic offerings, has caused a quite restricted perspective on the concept of experience, on the effects of experiences and on the values that are invested in experiences, resulting in the bias that I intend to offset in this research.

In chapter 3 I will answer the question "How can experiences be conceptualized from an individual's perspective?" The answer to this question will help to see experiences in a broader perspective than the organizational perspective taken by marketing and business scholars in the environment-centred approach. This organizational perspective is the main reason why experiences are treated as manageable economic

offerings as I will explain in chapter 2. By reconceptualizing experiences from an individual's perspective and by making use of the extensive amount of literature on experiences that is available in disciplines outside of the field of marketing and business literature, a spectrum of experience-concepts can be constructed which gives insight in different conceptualizations of experience and how these are related. This spectrum is intended to increase awareness of the current bias in the experience economy discourse in terms of the conceptualizations of experience and to help in offsetting this bias.

Chapter 4 addresses the excessive focus on the management and production of predetermined hedonic effects that characterizes the effect-centred approach to experiences in business and marketing literature. In this approach it is assumed that individuals are not looking for functional benefits anymore but that they desire hedonic effects. A further assumption is that the organization's role is to produce and manage these effects. By referring to literature from various disciplines outside of the fields of business and marketing, I want to give insight into various other potential effects of experiences and into the roles that organizations can play in the emergence of these effects, since the question is whether effects can be produced or managed at all. The answer to the question "Which kinds of effects can experiences have from an individual's perspective?" will broaden the perspective to incorporate effects beyond immediate hedonic effects, and it will clarify the roles that individuals and organizations play in experiences. The result of this chapter will be a spectrum of experience effects that is intended to increase awareness of the current bias in the experience economy discourse in terms of the different effects that experiences can have and to help offset this bias.

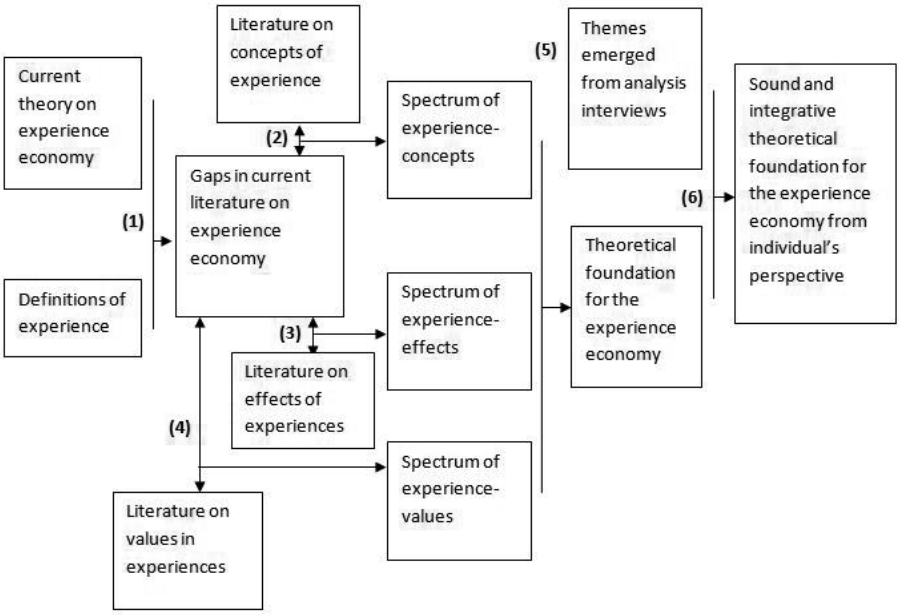
Question 4, "Which types of values do individuals invest in the experience?" addresses the myopic vision that is taken by marketing and business scholars on the role that individuals play in experiences. Their primary focus is the role of organizations in determining which values individuals should invest during the experience, hereby neglecting values that individuals invest in the experience beyond financial values. Individuals invest more than just financial values in the experience. They are active participants in the creation of value, and not merely passively absorbing whatever they are confronted with and have paid for. The neglect of the active role of individuals and of the different values they invest is becoming even more

problematic nowadays because of many developments that allow individuals to become more active than they have ever been. This does not mean that organizations have no role in the experience anymore, but their roles will change. Three roles for organizations in the experience economy will be presented and explained in chapter 5. The different view on values and the changes in the roles of organizations and individuals alike in the experience economy increase awareness of the current bias in the experience economy discourse related to the values that individuals invest and are intended to help in offsetting this bias.

These first four questions represent the theoretical aspect of this research, the current state of affairs in the marketing and business domain of experience literature (question 1) and the concepts, effects and values of experience from a multidisciplinary theoretical perspective (questions 2, 3 and 4). Most of these multidisciplinary perspectives on the concepts, effects and values of experience contain the individual's perspective. However, for the construction of a truly sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective I argue that incorporating the opinion of real individuals is necessary. For this reason the research also contains an empirical component in the form of 15 existential-phenomenological interviews that were held with individuals who have experienced a free choice learning experience. The choices underlying the research design and methodological aspects of the interviewing process and analysis will be presented in chapter 6. In chapter 7, an answer will be provided to the question "Which themes emerge from the existential phenomenological interviews on individuals' free choice learning experiences?"

Finally, in chapter 8 the themes and insights from the existential-phenomenological interviews will be confronted with the theoretical insights from chapters 3 through 5 to answer the question "How can the insights on experience derived from the theoretical analysis in chapters 3 through 5 and the insights on free choice learning experiences derived from the existential-phenomenological interviews be related in order to construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy?"
By combining the collected theoretical and empirical insights on experience, I will not only have constructed a theoretical foundation for the experience economy that is

sound and integrative in the sense that it incorporates the three essential elements of experience by combining the three different approaches of experience, but the theoretical foundation will also be constructed based on the individual's



perspective,

Figure 1.3 – Research model according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (1998)

since not only in the selection of theoretical insights the individual's perspective has been an important criterion, but also because the insights from the interviews represent the meanings that individuals have given to their own experience. By answering the abovementioned 6 questions, which are depicted graphically in the research model in figure 1.3, I intend to attain my research objective of offsetting the current bias in the experience economy discourse, by constructing a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective.

Before presenting the research context in chapter 2, I would like to present the structure of this thesis and the academic, professional and societal contributions I plan to make.

1.3 Structural outline of the thesis

The thesis before you, in short, has been structured as graphically depicted in figure 1.4.

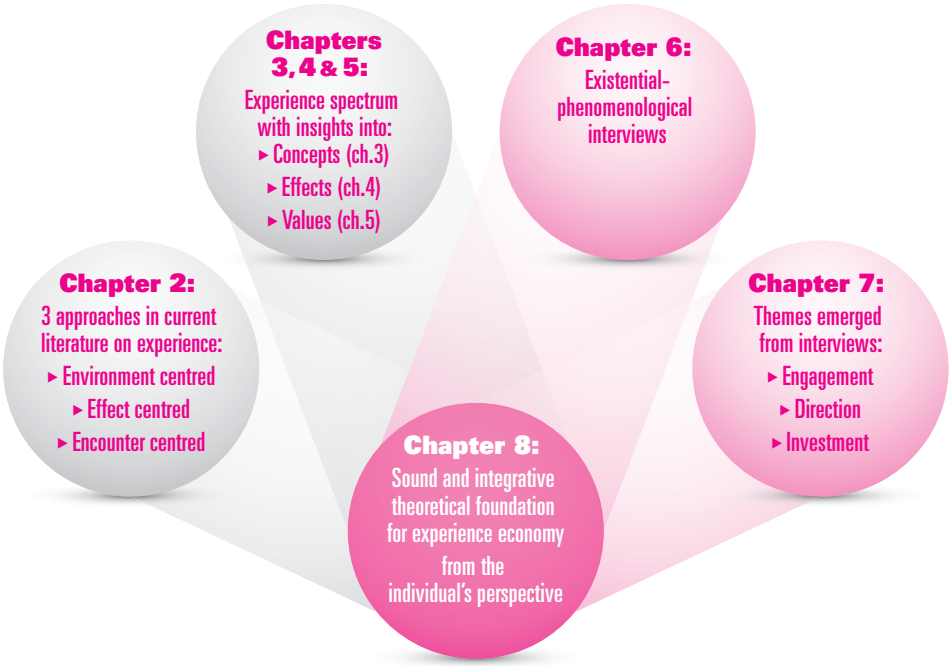


Figure 1.4 – Research outline

This figure will be presented before each chapter as a point of reference. After this introductory chapter I will present the research context in chapter 2. There are 3 assumptions that underlie my view on experience: 1) experiences are a sign of a dematerializing economy, 2) there are per definition three essential elements that constitute an experience and therefore also three ways in which experiences can be

approached, and 3) the perceived risk of commoditization of economic offerings has led business and marketing scholars to treat experiences in an objectivistic way, which has limited their view on the concept of experience, the effects that can result from experiences and the values that are invested in the experience-encounter. These issues I will explore as the problems related to respectively the environment-centred, the effect-centred and the encounter-centred approaches. In chapters 3, 4 and 5 I will propose a solution to these problems by offering a broader interpretivistic perspective on experience. In chapter 3 I will broaden the perspective on experience by presenting a spectrum of experience-concepts, which shows that the current focus of scholars on experiences as objects, events or activities in the individual's environment with objective qualities that can be produced and managed, is a too limited way of viewing experiences. In chapter 4 I will focus on the fact that although current literature on experiences within the effect-centred approach is mainly concerned with the management of hedonic effects, one can question whether managing effects is at all possible. Furthermore, hedonic effects can be criticized as being just one sort of potential effects that can result from having an experience. I will therefore conclude this chapter with a spectrum of experience-effects. In chapter 5 I will explore what happens during the encounter of the individual and his or her environment, and what consequences the specific characteristics of experiences have for the exchange of values in this encounter. In current literature the perspective on the role of the individual in the encounter is usually limited to him or her investing financial value but I will show that there are various other values that the individual may invest and that this requires a change in the roles that organizations play in the encounter. The broader perspective on experience, resulting from chapters 3 through 5, will result in an overview of experience-concepts, - effects and –encounters which can be used to make more sensible decisions when working in the experience economy.

After the theoretical exploration of the conceptualizations, effects and values of experiences in chapters 3 through 5, I will introduce the empirical section of my research design in chapter 6. To construct a foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective, I will have to integrate the individual's perspective. I will explain why I have chosen for existential-phenomenological interviews to do exactly this and present my research design for the empirical part of this research. The analysis of the interview data is presented in chapter 7, resulting in three main

themes that have emerged from the interviews. Finally, I will confront the theoretical insights from chapters 3 through 5 with the empirical insights from chapter 7 to construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective with the aim of offsetting the current bias in the experience economy discourse, which is the objective of this research.

1.4 Contributions

The objective of any study is to make a contribution to knowledge. In terms of Locke and Golden-Biddle's (1997) distinction between two different possible types of contributions, the contribution of this study falls under the problematization of the so-called "intertextual field", or the existing body of literature and publications that are seen as relevant to the study. The intertextual field can be problematized in three ways: incompleteness, inadequacy and incommensurability.

When gaps are identified in the existing literature (incompleteness problematization), when different, relevant, and important perspectives are not sufficiently incorporated in existing literature (inadequacy problematization) or when claims are made that are inaccurate in the existing body of literature (incommensurability problematization), one can make a contribution to knowledge by solving these limitations. I will refer to the different types of problematizations in the following discussion of the contributions that I intend to make with this study. I have grouped the intended contributions in terms of my research objective.

"A sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy…" Although the term 'experience economy' was coined more than a decade ago (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) and references to experiences as economic offerings have been present for over half a century, to this date there is still no overarching theoretical foundation for what this so-called experience economy entails. In chapter 2 I will present a variety of theories on experience and the experience economy and show how confusing and often even contradictory the existing body of knowledge is at this moment. The lack of a sound theoretical foundation for the experience economy makes it difficult to do research in this area and to build upon the existing body of

research and literature. If different scholars adhere to different definitions or concepts of experience, it becomes problematic to compare the different theories and research results. One of the contributions I therefore intend to make is to offer such an overview, of how the experience economy can be conceptualized, resulting in an intuitive vocabulary to be used by scholars who are interested in studying the experience economy. This contribution clearly belongs under the incompleteness problematization, since the existing body of knowledge on the experience economy suffers from a lack of an overarching theoretical foundation of what the experience economy entails.

"…from the individual's perspective…"
One of the problems I see in the existing body of literature on the experience economy is the dominant organizational perspective. Although the role of the individual is often heralded to become ever more crucial for success, the perspective from which many theories on experience economy have been written is still that of the organization and not that of the individual as I will show in chapter 2. This dominance of the organizational perspective may have been unproblematic for theories on products that are produced in a factory at a distance from the individual but since the individual is involved in the experience his or her perspective necessarily has to be taken into account. By constructing a theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective I make a contribution related to the inadequacy problematization of the intertextual field since I notice that this different, relevant, and important perspective has up to now not been sufficiently incorporated in existing literature on the experience economy. Yet another contribution I want to make with this study is more methodological in nature. There is still a dominant quantitative perspective in research within the fields of business and marketing although there are signs of a growing call for more qualitative or at least mixed-method-designs (Koller, 2008). The growing importance of the customer experience and concepts like meaning and symbolism in these fields may be a reason for this. By conducting qualitative interviews in this study I want to contribute to the knowledge on how qualitative research methods can be used to incorporate the individual's perspective in the context of research on the experience economy.

"…to offset the current bias in the experience economy discourse."

The main motivation for wanting to construct a sound and integrative theoretical foundation for the experience economy from the individual's perspective, is that I want to offset the current bias in the experience economy discourse. As I have stated in short above and as I will explain more in depth in chapter 2 there are three essential components in every experience: something that is experienced, someone who experiences and the encounter between these two. Three approaches can be recognized in the existing body of knowledge on the experience economy: one that mainly focuses on the something, one that mainly focuses on the someone and one that mainly focuses on the encounter, or the environment-centred approach (focused on the something), the effect-centred approach (focused on the someone) and the encounter-centred approach (focused on the encounter). Since all three components are equally important for an experience to happen, a focus on one of these means that the other two are lacking. Claims about experiences based on notions of only one component are then bound to be incomplete or even inaccurate, when one is not aware of the fact that one has a mere partial and thus biased, view on experience. By constructing a theory that incorporates all three components this bias becomes explicit and can be offset.
Besides the bias in the experience economy discourse because of the focus on only one component of experiences, also within the approaches there exists a bias in the discourse. As I will thoroughly discuss in chapter 2, the discourse in existing literature on the experience economy is biased towards a quite objectivistic view, in which the organization, and not the individual, is in command. I will discuss the contribution I wish to make with this study for each approach specifically.

Literature belonging to the environment-centred approach is biased towards a view of experiences as economic offerings with objective features that can be produced by organizations. However, as will be discussed in chapter 3, experiences are not objects that can be produced and many instances of what in current literature and practice are called experiences are not experiences at all. Without a clear understanding of what experiences are and what types of experiences can be distinguished, there will remain confusion in the experience economy discourse. If non-experiences and experiences are grouped together under the name experience, then inaccurate claims about experience are bound to be made. A contribution that I want to make in the context of this incommensurability problematization is that I want to present a

spectrum of different intuitive and logically related experience conceptualizations that will help the discourse on the experience economy.
Literature belonging to the effect-centred approach is biased towards a view of experiences as hedonic effects that can be managed. In chapter 4 I argue that 1) the claim that the effects in individuals can be managed is inaccurate since there is a process of meaning making involved and 2) the dominant focus on hedonic effects causes one to neglect other potentially valuable effects. Especially longer-lasting effects that are more difficult to achieve fall short of attention. For the experience economy discourse it is important that these inaccurate claims are addressed and an alternative and broader perspective is offered since much of the critique on the the experience economy has to do with its alleged focus on the management of hedonic effects and the resulting so-called Disneyfication of society. By presenting an overview of different effects that experiences can have, the potential broader scope of the experience economy becomes apparent.

Literature belonging to the encounter-centred approach is biased towards a view of experiences as products that are sold to individuals in exchange for money. However, claims made based on this view of experience are bound to be inaccurate since the neglect of other values causes a faulty understanding of how individuals dealing with immaterial products like experiences behave. For example: the investment of money in exchange for a product is often seen as detrimental to the perceived value by a customer, but the investment of other types of values can be beneficial for the perceived value. A mere focus on the money exchange would cause a neglect of these beneficial effects of value investments during experiences. Also, when immaterial products are involved, as is more and more the case in our society, a focus on money causes one to neglect other types of business models in which other types of value investments are dominant. A societal effect of the dominant focus on charging money for experiences that is often alluded to is the fact that this may come at the cost of the public domain. As can be seen, and as will be explained in depth in chapter 5, the view of experiences as products that are sold to individuals in exchange for money causes one to have a very narrow, and even inaccurate view of the roles of individuals in the experience. By investigating how the roles of the individual and the organization during an experience can be perceived based on a broader meaning of value than just financial value, I want to contribute to a better understanding of the value exchanges in the experience economy.