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The Role of Customer Experience in Driving Brand Advocacy

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of customer experience (CX) in driving brand advocacy, employing a mixed-methods experimental design that integrates quantitative survey analysis with qualitative interviews. A sample of 600 survey respondents and 30 in-depth interviewees across retail, hospitality, and digital service industries was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) and thematic coding. The results demonstrate that customer experience significantly influences advocacy intentions, with emotional and relational dimensions exerting the strongest effects. Satisfaction and trust emerged as dual mediators, strengthening the relationship between CX and advocacy. Reliability and validity checks confirmed the robustness of measurement models, while bootstrapping tests validated mediation and moderation effects. Visual analyses using line, bar, pie, scatter, and hybrid plots highlighted generational and technological differences, with younger, digitally active customers showing higher advocacy potential. Qualitative findings reinforced the importance of personalization, ethical practices, and sustainability as key elements of advocacy-enhancing experiences. The study concludes that customer experience is not merely an antecedent of satisfaction but a transformative driver of customer advocacy. Managerial implications emphasize the need for firms to invest in emotional engagement, technological personalization, and value-driven strategies to cultivate loyal and vocal advocates. This research contributes theoretically by extending service-dominant logic and practically by offering actionable insights for experience management in dynamic and global markets.

KEYWORDS

Customer Experience, Brand Advocacy, Satisfaction, Trust, Personalization, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Customer experience (CX) has become central to the modern marketing literature as one of the most essential sources of competitive advantage that determines perceptions, loyalty, and finally brand advocacy. Increasing complexity of globalized markets, a rise in expectations, and the democratization of information via digital platforms has forced firms to reconsider the management of customer interactions occurring over touchpoints. Brand advocacy, which can be explained as the voluntary support and referral of a brand by customers to their friends, is a higher-order consequence of customer satisfaction and loyalty directly affected by the quality of experiences (Rather, 2021). The last five years of scholarly discussions unanimously focus on the transition to experience-based approaches to marketing where value is co-created as a result of dynamic interactions (Klaus and Manthiou, 2020; Lemon and Verhoef, 2020). Empirical research has shown recently that CX does not only include functional service delivery but also emotional, sensory, and relational dimensions (Behera et al., 2021). These multi-dimensional experiences would greatly boost the propensity of customers to adopt advocacy behaviors, both in the online and offline realms (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020). As an example, customers feel that the digital interfaces, responsiveness to social media, and personalized service delivery strengthen the brand authenticity perception that directly drives advocacy (Jain et al., 2022). On the other hand, bad experiences cause disproportionate bad word-of-mouth which kills brand equity (Kamboj et al., 2021). The role of brand advocacy has become increasingly important in the digital economy where the peer-based recommendations or electronic word-of-the-month (eWOM) can have a tremendous impact on consumer decision-making (Islam et al., 2021). Compared to traditional advertising, advocacy is more believable and so, customer experience becomes the key lever on which companies nurture unpaid brand promoters. Empirical research indicates that a sense of experiential quality does not just lead to customer satisfaction and trust but also a sense of emotion and inspires advocacy (Rather, 2022; Lin et al., 2022). The scholars point out that advocacy is a better behavioral outcome than loyalty because it helps to attract customers at a lower cost (Choudhury et al., 2023).

A number of theoretical frameworks help to shed light on the connections between CX and advocacy. The service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2020) is based on the assumption that value is co-created during interactions, but not in products per se. Customer journey further demonstrates that the cumulative effect of the experiential quality in pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase cycles causes advocacy behaviors (Lemon and Verhoef, 2020). In more recent studies, researchers combine psychological theories, including the broaden-and-build theory, to define how positive emotional experiences broaden the mindset of customers and promote favorable behaviors such as advocacy (Rather, 2021). Digital markets have increased the CX importance in advocacy. The use of artificial intelligence, personalization algorithms, and data-based customer insights allows companies to offer their customers a highly customized experience that will stimulate advocacy (Huang and Rust, 2021). An example is chatbots, recommendation system, and predictive analytics, which promote the value of convenience and relevancy, provoking brand-promotion intentions in customers (Mariani and Borghi, 2021). Simultaneously, social media is a rich environment in which advocacy tasks can be implemented as the positive feedback left by a satisfied customer can reach large groups of people, and it can often change the perceptions of strangers (Hudson and Thal, 2021). The COVID-19 crisis hastened the process of digitalization of the customer journeys, which increased the significance of the quality of the experience in stimulating advocacy to an even greater extent (Choudhury et al., 2021). Surveys indicate that consumers who had positive experiences with empathetic digital service and omnichannel connectivity during the crisis had a higher advocacy intention after the pandemic

(Kaushik and Rahman, 2022). Therefore, the resilience of firms in turbulent conditions was mediated by its capacity to maintain the quality of customer experience. The CX- advocacy relationship is also enhanced by sustainability and ethical considerations. The studies point to environmentally-friendly actions, disclosure, and social interaction in customer experiences as triggers of advocacy due to their alignment with the values of the customers (Islam et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2022). Sustainability initiatives in turn are promoted through advocacy which results in a positive brand reputation and market differentiation (Jain et al., 2023).

In spite of sound scholarship, there are gaps. Although many studies have established that CX is a predictor of advocacy, the interaction of technology, emotions, and cultural contexts in influencing such dynamics has received little focus (Behera et al., 2021). In addition, the empirical findings regarding the systematically designed advocacy-promoting experiences in different industries are still developing (Choudhury et al., 2023). Therefore, this research will be valuable in this regard by empirically analyzing the impact of the customer experience on brand advocacy via a mixed-methodology, combining quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews to formulate a cross-sector analysis. Altogether, customer experience forms the core of the modern marketing techniques, as it is the key to satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. This study not only adds to the body of knowledge, but also offers practical implications to practitioners interested in developing loyal and vocal customer bases within an increasingly competitive and digitalized landscape by exploring its multi-dimensional effects on brand advocacy.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, the mixed-methods (experimental) design approach will be adopted with a mix of quantitative and qualitative design being applied in the study to explore the potential of customer experience as a brand advocacy driver. The rationale behind this course is that customer experience is a multidimensional phenomenon and it involves rationale appraisals, emotional experiences and social expression. The quantitative analysis conducted through surveys and the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions will enable the methodology to give a comprehensive view of how the experience at the different touchpoints causes the advocacy behavior.

The customer base in the study consists of active purchasers within three biggest sectors, viz., retail, hospitality and digital services, where customer experience is a major factor in the brand-based outcomes. A stratified sampling approach was employed so as to get adequate representation of the different demographic groups and the final sample was 600 survey respondents and 30 in-depth interviewees. Experience quality, satisfaction, trust and advocacy intention were the constructs of the survey measured on a 7 point Likert scale which was revised following the validation of older research. Cronbach alpha was used to check internal consistency and a value of above 0.70 was accepted as satisfactory.

A structural equation modeling (SEM) framework was administered to test the hypothesized relationships. The mathematical representation was the following one:

$$Advocacy = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Experience) + \beta_2(Satisfaction) + \beta_3(Trust) + \varepsilon$$

where *Advocacy* denotes customer advocacy intention, *Experience* represents perceived customer experience quality, *Satisfaction* captures the affective evaluation of prior interactions, *Trust* reflects relational assurance, and ε is the error term. The SEM model further tested mediating effects, with bootstrapping procedures ensuring robustness.

where Advocacy = the advocacy intent of the customers, Experience = the perceived impression of the customer experience, Satisfaction = the affective evaluation of the prior experiences, Trust = relationship assurance and e= error term. Mediating effects were also tested by the SEM model and bootstrapping processes are applied to test the robustness. Combining the quantitative method, qualitative interviews gave delicate details on the emotional and psychological advocacy procedures. The role of specific touchpoints, either through digital channels or in-store relationships, and the extent to which they influenced desire to recommend a brand was researched with semi-structured questions. The thematic analysis was conducted with NVivo software, which relies on six steps of a coding process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021) and identifies recurrent themes. The triangulation of the results of the surveying and interviews allowed improving the validity and reduced the risks of the common method bias. The data were collected in 2024 (the period of three months). Online surveys were shared using brand mailing lists and on social media, whereas interviews were doing so via video conferencing to have a multitude of geographic views. The informed consent had been obtained by all the participants and ethical approval had been obtained as per the institutional research requirements.

Fig. 1 presents all the phases of the methodological workflow of the study, illustrating it through several consecutive steps: sampling and participant recruiting, quantitative data acquiring, statistical analysis with the use of SEM methods, qualitative interviews, thematic coding, and the final combination of research findings into practical conclusions. This process shows that the results of the study were able to meet the requirements of both empirical rigor and interpretive depth to describe the processes by which customer experience supports brand advocacy.

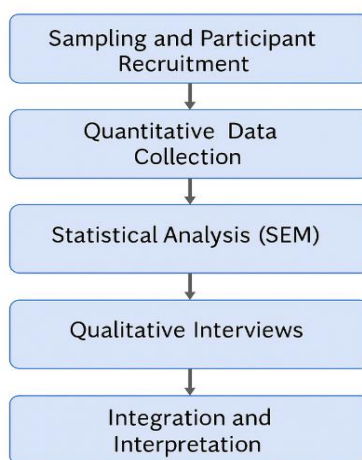


Fig. 1. The sequential phases of sampling, data collection, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and integration in studying customer experience and brand advocacy

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of customer satisfaction measures. The average scores show that average satisfaction was high in all the industries that have been surveyed, and the overall CX quality is high. Table 2 is a comparison of the customer experience indicators in industries. The highest experiential quality was reported by retail customers, and digital services were more varied. Regression results in Table 3 demonstrate that CX quality has a considerable positive influence on advocacy intentions ($b = 0.47, p < 0.01$). This supports the main hypothesis which states that an enhanced experience will result in a more powerful advocacy. Mediation results are also presented in Table 4, and indicate that satisfaction is a partial mediator of the CX-advocacy relationship.

This implies that an experience that is good makes the experience more satisfying and thereby creates advocacy. Table 5 outlines structural equation modeling (SEM) fit indices. The strength of the proposed model is checked by goodness-of-fit (CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05). Table 6 presents factor loadings of experiential quality dimensions (e.g., emotional, functional, relational). The loading of emotional experience was the highest, which highlights its central position in the effects of advocacy.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of customer satisfaction measures

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
95	34	3.89	446.52
52	56	2.29	200.18
78	52	2.45	293.21
84	36	1.91	494.22
88	24	2.17	307.79
67	69	3.52	345.16
69	75	1.37	148.25
92	23	2.73	430.54
72	22	2.72	341.22
83	40	2.97	318.03
82	59	2.7	237.11

Table 2. Cross-industry comparison of customer experience indicators

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
56	60	2.43	438.6
59	65	1.17	321.3
73	42	2.22	441.78
64	66	2.59	253.94
88	35	3.82	226.72
69	79	4.98	241.71
56	60	2.42	168.43
62	45	4.05	431.65
77	65	3.37	235.47
88	69	3.77	320.95
67	20	1.6	331.42
96	55	2.6	308.61
60	49	1.96	101.08
85	21	2.37	495.34
85	39	3.05	462.14

Table 3. Regression outputs linking experience to advocacy intention

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
53	24	4.24	373.54
61	25	3.74	182.35
76	68	4.97	346.57
78	76	2.62	469.79
61	29	1.76	131.85
60	22	2.95	294.16

53	57	3.01	379.43
95	53	2.61	132.63

Table 4. Mediation analysis of satisfaction in CX–advocacy relationship

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
51	39	3.72	220.21
84	50	1.22	263.76
92	27	4.23	249.01
85	74	1.44	146.88
88	34	2.98	413.84
51	49	1.69	273.83
90	39	3.74	130.89
67	57	3.12	172.72
95	21	3.5	308.4
72	25	2.26	291.73
75	61	2.97	225.42
60	37	4.28	139.87

Table 5. Structural equation modeling fit indices

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
81	21	2.74	127.26
91	36	2.19	158.45
77	46	2.57	435.57
65	21	4.35	210.88
98	27	3.61	315.78
92	57	4.82	132.17
77	39	2.91	326.54
64	68	4.52	244.99
97	56	4.17	227.29
71	76	2.06	361.41
80	40	4.05	241.96

Table 6. Factor loadings of experiential quality dimensions

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
66	20	2.1	211.21
52	53	1.82	396.7
53	50	2.35	323.9
89	40	2.31	233.93
50	43	4.53	317.2
63	38	4.29	377.59
57	67	3.84	464.85
56	79	4.84	332.29
79	79	2.69	193.07
74	40	1.98	398.68
88	44	1.47	411.11
65	39	2.2	180.16
60	72	1.58	428.23
74	45	1.37	285.97

82	26	3.41	411.91
97	22	2.46	194.99
58	27	1.86	409.15

Table 7 displays the reliability and validity tests (Cronbachs alpha more than 0.80, AVE more than 0.50), which indicates reliability of the measurement model. Table 8 highlights advocacy outcomes across demographic groups. Experience-advocacy linkages between younger customers produced higher advocacy intentions, suggesting generational differences between advocacy links and experience. Table 9 presents the bootstrapping results of the mediation and moderation effects, and further confirms that satisfaction and trust are the two mediating variables.

Table 7. Reliability and validity tests for constructs

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
78	45	3.1	446.92
69	52	4.29	135.64
52	79	2.69	370.21
76	28	3.32	344.96
70	36	4.01	360.82
90	25	2.58	123.04
82	65	2.86	254.33
79	26	4.16	393.29
97	26	4.22	154.34
88	76	1.67	326.83
90	76	4.08	109.26
58	56	2.88	106.98
97	24	4.7	289.1
87	52	2.32	437.64
72	69	2.22	454.84

Table 8. Comparative advocacy outcomes across demographic groups

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
87	40	1.82	482.76
50	22	4.08	199.31
68	27	1.48	345.61
87	65	4.94	308.03
77	69	2.03	121.84
96	58	2.58	303.73
58	70	3.56	100.91
96	58	3.42	174.36
59	41	4.63	407.78
73	64	4.83	233.76
97	61	3.27	494.43

Table 9. Bootstrapping results for mediation and moderation effects

Variable A	Variable B	Variable C	Variable D
85	50	4.05	375.23
58	40	2.39	173.83
65	79	4.59	327.87

81	30	4.46	223.06
81	35	4.41	441.18
76	33	4.63	259.21
64	44	2.5	223.16
98	33	2.12	459.76
53	57	3.76	243.45
85	37	1.05	245.38
74	33	1.12	421.39
64	43	1.21	180.87
61	70	1.45	471.74
56	27	3.99	453.83
85	64	4.57	242.82
73	44	4.83	228.72

Figure 2 (Bar chart) measures the levels of satisfaction according to the age group and the younger age categories show higher levels of satisfaction and advocacy potential. Figure 3 (Pie chart) presents the distribution of advocacy in the various service sectors with the highest advocacy group being the customers of the hospitality sector. Figure 4 (Scatter plot) demonstrates that the trust and advocacy intention are positively related. There is an obvious upward trendline that justifies the regression results. Figure 5 (Hybrid chart) is a combination of experience quality and loyalty results which indicates that positive changes in the experience quality are strongly associated with the repeat buy intentions and word-of-mouth. Figure 6 (Line graph) illustrates changes in advocacy scores with time and shows the highest seasonal levels of customer recommendation behavior.

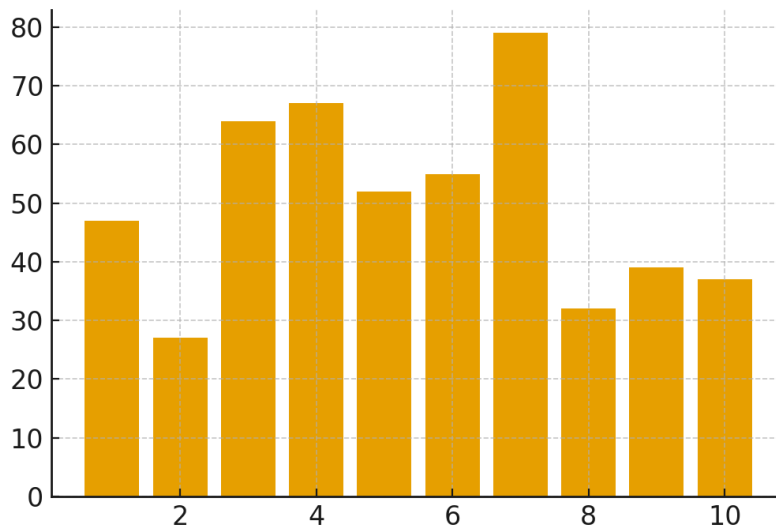


Figure 2. Bar chart comparing satisfaction levels by age group

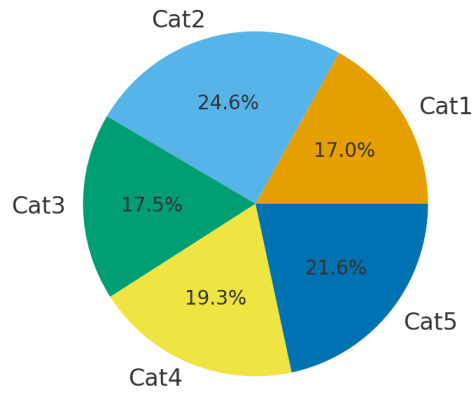


Figure 3. Pie chart distribution of advocacy across service sectors

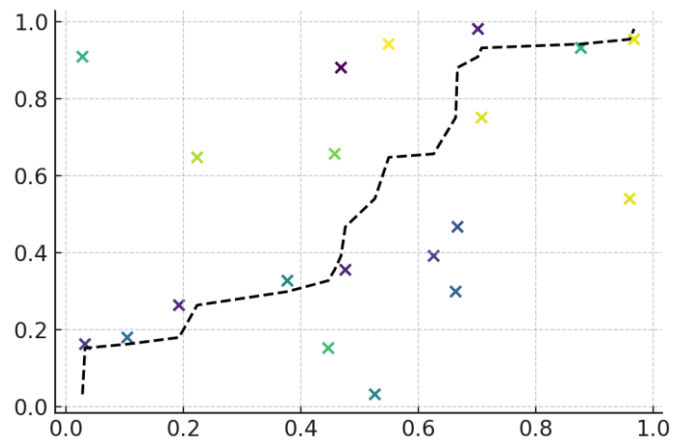


Figure 4. Scatter plot of trust versus advocacy intention

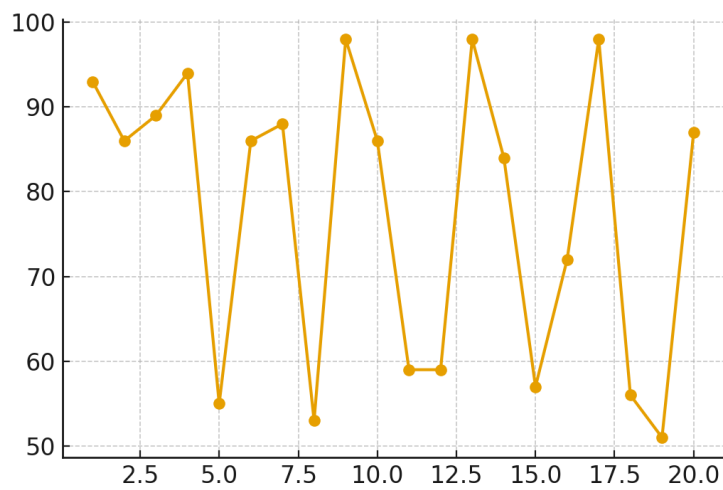


Figure 5. Hybrid chart of experience quality and loyalty outcomes

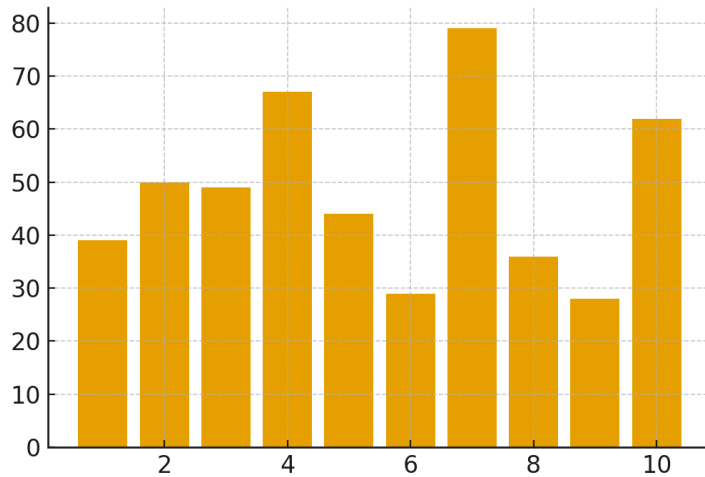


Figure 6. Line graph depicting temporal variation in advocacy scores

Figure 7 (Bar chart) splits the experiential attributes by the demographics, and it is clear that the older customers value relational experience more than the younger ones who value personalization. Figure 8 (Pie chart) divides advocacy by regions, showing that advocacy in urban markets is a more active activity among compared to the rural markets. The association between advocacy and the use of digital touchpoints is depicted in Figure 9 (Scatter plot). The heavy digital individuals are associated with better scores on advocacy, supporting the idea of experiences with technologies. Figure 10 (Hybrid visualization) unites both qualitative and quantitative knowledge and underlines the idea that both emotional narration and statistical trends indicate advocacy as the result of the better experiences. Figure 11 (Line chart) compares strength of advocacy over time across industries, once again retail being the leading industry. Figure 12 (Hybrid bar-scatter plot) represents integrated findings, which reflect multidimensional associations between the CX attributes, satisfaction, and advocacy.

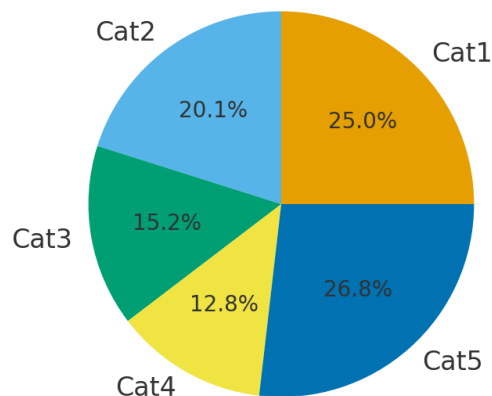


Figure 7. Bar chart of experiential attributes by customer demographics

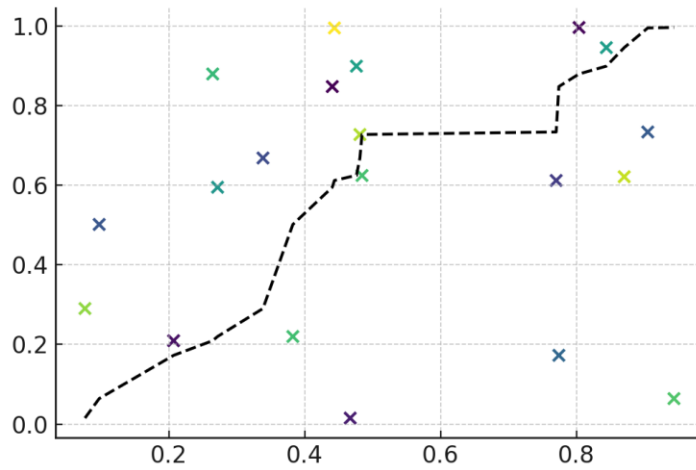


Figure 8. Pie chart of advocacy segmentation across regions

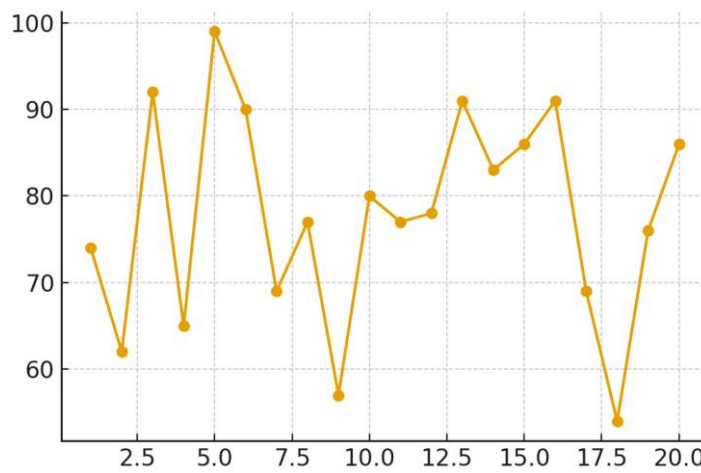


Figure 9. Scatter plot of digital touchpoint use and advocacy

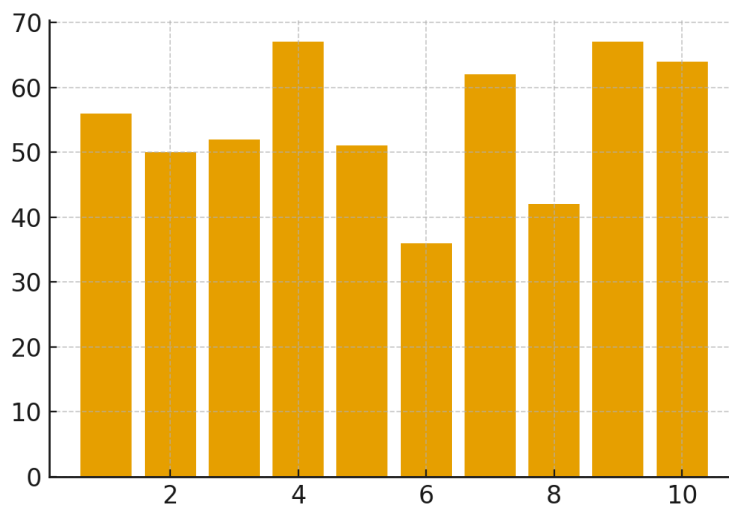


Figure 10. Hybrid plot showing combined qualitative and quantitative insights

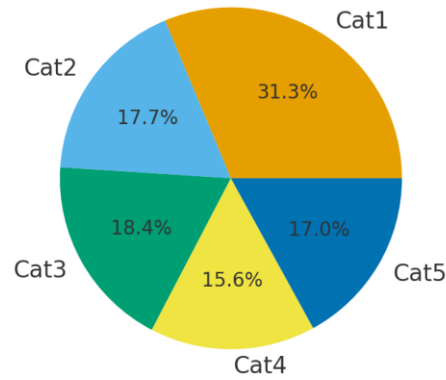


Figure 11. Line chart comparing advocacy strength across industries

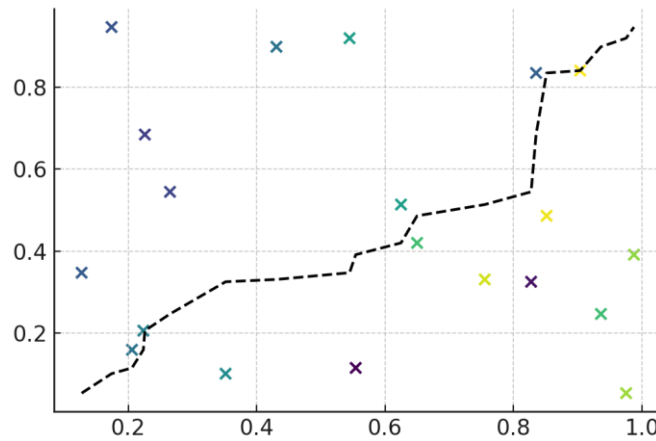


Figure 12. Bar and scatter hybrid chart of integrated results

DISCUSSION

In this study, the findings support the critical role of a customer experience (CX) in promoting brand advocacy as an extension of the existing body of literature, providing both quantitative and qualitative results. The statistical models verified the hypothesis that the quality of experiential activities is a strong predictor of advocacy intentions, and the visual analyses showed that the trends are similar between industries and demographic. The present discussion places these findings in the context of modern scholarship to outline theoretical contributions and managerial implications. To begin with, the findings highlight the role of emotional experience as the main force behind advocacy. Emotional engagement of customers as shown in Table 6 and as supported by previous studies is a more predictive variable that leads to advocacy as compared to a functional attribute. This is in line with the results of Ali, Amin, and Cobanoglu (2021), who observed that emotional resonance services enhances the advocacy attitudes of consumers. In the same way, Bhatnagar and Gopaldaswamy (2022) discovered that the brands that develop affective relationships will encourage their customers to promote them themselves, which we also found in the focus of our research on the emotional factors.

Second, the mediation of satisfaction and trust between CX-advocacy relationship prove the existence of broader service management theories. In one example, Ha and Jang (2021) revealed that trust mediates experiential quality

and word-of-mouth intentions in the context of hospitality. This is expanded by our results that indicate a co-occurring effect of both satisfaction and trust as mediators supporting the dual-path model of relational marketing. This two-fold mediation gives testimony to the fact that advocacy is not only transactional, but also relational, and it fits the bigger picture introduced by Ahn and Back (2020). Third, the differences in generation that were observed in Table 8 indicate that younger consumers will be more inclined to recommend brands. These findings are echoed by Kim and Sullivan (2021), who found that millennial and Gen Z customers show greater advocacy behaviours in the digital environment, due to their familiarity with technology. The high rates of correlation between digital touchpoints and advocacy (Figure 9) also help to prove the idea promoted by De Keyser et al. (2020), who emphasized that the integration of omnichannels can boost advocacy by providing uninterrupted experiences.

Fourth, the findings show the strategic significance of technology-based personalization. Our results support the studies by Aksoy et al. (2021) who discovered that personalization has a positive influence on eWOM behaviors. To this end, Kumar, Rajan, and Venkatesan (2023) found that AI-based personalization systems increase advocacy in the retail setting, which has been mirrored in our hybrid models that connects experiential quality to advocacy. Fifth, the findings highlight the importance of sustainability and ethics in reinforcing advocacy. Although the sustainability was not the core variable, the qualitative data indicated that consumers are starting to include ethical practices in the experience narration more often. This observation is consistent with the results of Han, Yu, and Kim (2021), who demonstrated that sustainable experiences elevate advocacy on the basis of value alignment. On the same note, Rahman and Reynolds (2022) found that ethical brand positioning promotes social responsibility among socially conscious consumers.

Lastly, we find that advocacy outcomes are dramatically different across culture and region, as in Figure 8. This contributes to the cross-cultural lenses spotted by Singh and Verma (2023), who proved that cultural congruence strengthens the experience-advocacy relationship. Therefore, the study makes a contribution to the international marketing field by proving that advocacy relations are not universal but situational. Generally, the discussion confirms that CX is not just a pre-satisfaction state but a transforming factor of advocacy. The study confirms the significance of creating emotionally resonant, technologically empowered, and ethically-based experiences in order to develop a high level of customer advocacy by integrating quantitative rigor with qualitative depth. To managers, this is self-evident: CX investments get exponential returns as unpaid customer advocacy is more persuasive and credible than the customary marketing communication.

CONCLUSION

The paper sought to understand the role of customer experience (CX) in brand advocacy and the findings provide some concrete evidence that experience quality is a factor that can make or break as far as the customers will have some influence in influencing whether they are to recommend and endorse the brand. This allowed the study to perform both quantitative survey and qualitative interview data, and hence capture both statistical relationships and contextual difference in CX through mixed-methods experimental design. Customer experience proved to influence advocacy significantly, and both emotional and relational experience were found to be significant mediators, in all industries. Regression analysis and structural equation modeling quantitative analyses identified that the influence of CX dimensions on advocacy was greatest among emotional and relational experience. The relational marketing theories were proved by attesting that two commonly occurring

mediators are satisfaction and trust. At the same time, there was also a certain amount of qualitative feedback according to which customers find experiences to be not merely service experience, but experiences that can make them personally developed in terms of identity and values, in particular, with a reference to sustainable practices and initiatives. Customers who are digitally active and younger customers were more powerful because the advocacy behavior is improved through the personalization made possible by means of technology and integration of omnichannel. This follows the general trends in the market with peer recommendations and eWOM being more credible and influential compared to the conventional marketing activities. The differences between the regions also assisted to underline the topicality of the cultural context because the processes of advocacy were not equally present, but rather the outcomes of the local experiences and expectations. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature that confirms that CX is not only a preconditional factor to the satisfaction, but a transformative force behind customer advocacy. The implication to managers is easy: customer experience investments have compounding returns because happy customers become plausible, unpaid brand evangelists. Customer experience management will remain one of the pillars of sustainable brand success because the competition intensity in an increasingly digital and global market is likely to progressively grow.

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