ARTICLE IN PRESS

Journal of Business Research xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres

Service encounters, experiences and the customer journey: Defining the field and a call to expand our lens

Clay M. Voorhees[a], Paul W. Fombelle[b], Yany Gregoire[c], Sterling Bone[d], Anders Gustafsson[e,*], Rui Sousa[f], Travis Walkowiak[g]

[a] Michigan State University, Eli Broad College of Business, East Lansing, MI 48824, United States
[b] Northeastern University, D'Amore-McKim School of Business, Boston, MA 02115, United States
[c] HEC Montreal, Montréal, (Québec) H3T 2A7, Canada
[d] Utah State University, John M. Huntsman School of Business, Logan, UT 84322, United States
[e] CTF, Service Research Center, Karlstad Business School, Karlstad University, SE-651 88 Karlstad, Sweden
[f] Catholic University of Portugal (Porto), Rua Diogo Botelho, 1327, Portugal
[g] Michigan State University, Eli Broad College of Business, East Lansing, MI 48824, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Service research
Service experience
Service encounters
Pre-core encounter
Core encounter
Post-core encounter

ABSTRACT

Service researchers have emphasized the importance of studying the service experience, which encompasses multiple service encounters. Although the reflection on a series of service encounters has increased, the scope of research in this space remains narrow. Service research has traditionally concentrated on understanding, measuring and optimizing the core service delivery. While this focused lens has generated extraordinary knowledge and moved service research and practice forward, it has also resulted in a narrowly focused research field. The authors present a framework to guide comprehensive service experience research. Broadly, they define (1) *pre-core service encounter*, (2) *core service encounter*, and (3) *post-core service encounter* as distinct periods within a service experience. Further, they review the literature and put forward important research questions to be addressed within and across these periods. Finally, they argue that researchers need to consider simultaneously all periods of the service experience to make valuable contributions to the literature.

1. Introduction

From a service research perspective, relationships are built from a series of encounters with a firm (Voorhees, Fombelle, Allen, Bone, & Aach, 2014), and top managers today are expanding their strategies to design and manage the entire process the customer goes through to have a good experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). It is during this full series of encounters that customers make judgments about the firm's quality, and each encounter contributes to customers' overall satisfaction and willingness to continue the relationship (Bitner, 1990; Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990, Bitner & Wang, 2014; Bolton & Drew, 1992; Woodside, Frey, & Daly, 1989). However, the focus of service research for the past three decades has often been on understanding, measuring and optimizing the core service delivery and ensuring that the moments when the customer is "in the factory" are perceived as being excellent. But what happens leading up to the core and after the core has received less attention.

We argue that this narrowed focus on the core service delivery has caused service researchers and managers not fully to recognize evolving customer needs for a holistic service experience, which spans all potential service encounters (or touchpoints) with the firm. In this absence, service scholars may be overlooking opportunities to enhance the service experience; and, as a result, our research discipline runs the risk of painting an incomplete picture of the service experience. By taking a holistic view of the customer experience (pre-core-post), firms may be able to strengthen relationships with their most valuable customers and, in turn, increase customer retention, positive word-of-mouth and profitability.

For example, Tomorrowland—a festival of dance music in Belgium—is an organization fully embracing a holistic view of customer experience. Compared to most music festivals that last only a few days, Tomorrowland generates a year-long experience that climaxes around two weekends of shows presented in July. Tomorrowland has created a community—called People of Tomorrow—which is very active on social media. The managers make sure to provide constant materials to their community twelve months per year by providing relevant music, videos and information. The festival organizes many pre-core activities (e.g., a variety of traveling and accommodation

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: anders.gustafsson@kau.se (A. Gustafsson).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.04.014
Received 20 November 2016; Received in revised form 18 April 2017; Accepted 19 April 2017

packages, opportunities of co-traveling, etc.) and post-core activities (e.g., a detox day, an "after-festival" movie, etc.) so that the managers can connect with their customers before and after the festival.

Consistent with the Tomorrowland example, recent research conceptualized customer experience "as a customer's journey with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touchpoints" (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, p. 6). Thus, to truly understand how service firms can build and maintain lasting relationships, managers and researchers alike must not focus solely on the core service provision. Other authors have also recently called for research on the enhancement of service experiences (Gustafsson et al., 2015; Ostrom et al., 2015) and an inclusive view of all touchpoints within a service experience (Bolton, Gustafsson, McColl-Kennedy, Sirianni, & Tse, 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). Although this prior work has been foundational for service marketing, these previous reviews stop short of providing a critical review of research outside the lens of the core service encounter. A framework that focuses on the *integration* of the pre-core, core and post-core service encounters is still needed.

The current article strives to address this gap by focusing on reviewing and expanding the definitions of service encounter, by giving more attention to the "pre-core" and "post-core" periods, by discussing the "interdependencies" between the three encounter periods, and by highlighting the importance of strategically investing resources across the three encounter periods. In doing so, we hope to provide a framework that can play a role in launching another wave of service research that focuses on the linkage between the three encounter periods. To accomplish this, we have organized the article into three sections. First, we define and differentiate *service encounters* and *service experiences,* such that previous conceptualizations are reconciled with those of the newly-defined time periods. In this section, we define *pre-core service encounter*, *core service encounter* and *post-core service encounter* as the three distinct periods that make up a service experience. Second, we present a literature review and a research agenda for each type of service encounter. Third, we highlight the importance for firms to redistribute their resources across the three encounter periods and not to focus strictly on the core service encounter. In this last section, we discuss other potential models in which more emphasis is given to "pre-core" and "post-core" periods, depending on the competitive situation of a firm.

2. Service encounters versus the service experience

There has been inconsistency in the terminology used to refer to customer-firm or customer-employee interactions in service contexts. In light of the need for a comprehensive service experience framework, especially problematic is the interchangeable use of the terms "*service encounter*" and "*service experience.*" To suggest a specific protocol regarding the future use of these terms, we consider a recent take on their conceptualizations, and adapt the definitions of *service encounter* and *service experience* accordingly. In their review of the literature on service encounters and service experiences, Bitner and Wang (2014) illuminate the distinction and relationship between the terms. The distinction essentially lies in the discreteness of service encounters (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994) and the continuous nature of a service experience. In presenting a broadened framework for service experience research, we adhere to this distinction and extend the conceptualization of each term to account for the newly-defined pre-core, core, and post-core service encounter periods within a service experience.

In line with Bitner and Wang (2014), we define *service encounter* as any discrete interaction between the customer and the service provider relevant to a core service offering, including the interaction involving provision of the core service offering itself. This definition encompasses pre- and post-core encounters as well as those built into the core service provision as "moments of truth" that influence cumulative customer outcomes. Encounters have many forms and can be face-to-face in an actual service setting or online; they can also be over the phone, through the mail or even by catalogue (Bitner, Brown, & Meuter, 2000). Moments of truth are described as critical encounters between customers and firms that significantly impact customers' impressions of the firm and consumption (Beaujean, Davidson, & Madge, 2006; Bitner & Wang, 2014; Löfgren, 2005). While each service encounter is discrete, an element of customer impressions and satisfaction with the service provider is cumulative. Therefore, spillover of these outcomes from earlier service encounters accentuates the importance of a well-defined view of the overall service experience. The touchpoints are a service provider's way to facilitate the service encounter and create interactions with customers; for instance, they can be online platforms, physical environments or catalogues.

Thus, we define *service experience* as the period during which all service encounters relevant to a core service offering may occur. This concept comprises pre- and post-core encounters, as well as the encounters built into the core service provision as "moments of truth" that influence customer outcomes. This conceptualization widens the lens through which we view service experience by highlighting the pre-core, core and post-core service encounter periods. These distinct periods also provide an approach to organizing extant and future research on service experience. Indeed, this broadened view facilitates research not only on individual service encounters within a single period, but also on the dynamics of customer experience across these periods. Fig. 1 provides a graphical overview of the relationships between various service encounters and the service experience. Next, we elaborate on the distinct features of the core, pre-core and post-core encounters.

There are other researchers that have found it meaningful to point out the presence of different phases in the consumption process. Alderson (1965) makes the distinction between "sort" and "transformation." The sort phase entails bringing resources to a place (raw material and infrastructure) and the transformation phase adds form, space and time utilities. The chain of sorts and transformations can be very long. In turn, Grönroos (1998) argues that consumption of a service is a process consumption rather than an outcome consumption, where a consumer or user perceives the service production process as part of the service consumption. Moeller (2008) distinguishes among the following phases: facilities, transformations and usage. Similarly, Edvardsson and Olson (2006) subdivide the service into three dimensions: prerequisites for the service, process and outcome. The prerequisites refer to the infrastructure for the service and the outcome. Further, from a more resource perspective, Fliess and Kleinaltenkamp (2004) separate the periods into potential, process and outcome. Although these approaches are related to ours, we suggest a different conceptualization to capture the different aspects of an experience.

The *core service encounter period* is defined as the time interval during which the primary service offering is provided to the customer. The primary service fulfils a foundational customer need, which is the focal motivation that leads customers to engage with the service provider. This period—often referred to as the moment in which the customer is "in the factory"—has been researched extensively, with the literature investigating the core interactions between customers and employees, other customers, technologies (e.g., Bitner et al., 2000), and the service environment (e.g., Bitner, 1992). For example, this stage includes activities like delivering a lecture, receiving an annual physical from a doctor, staying at a hotel, or having a meal at restaurant. While previous research has suggested the importance of encounters throughout the service experience, including the periods outside of the core service encounter (Bitner, 1995), there is less research that formally examines the encounters before and after the core service encounter (see Lemon and Verhoef (2016) for a recent exception). Table 1 provides a review of several studies that provide a knowledge base for managing core encounters. In contrast with the core service encounter period, the function and purposes of the pre-core and post-core service encounters exist mainly in reference to the core service.

We define *pre-core service encounter period* as the time interval

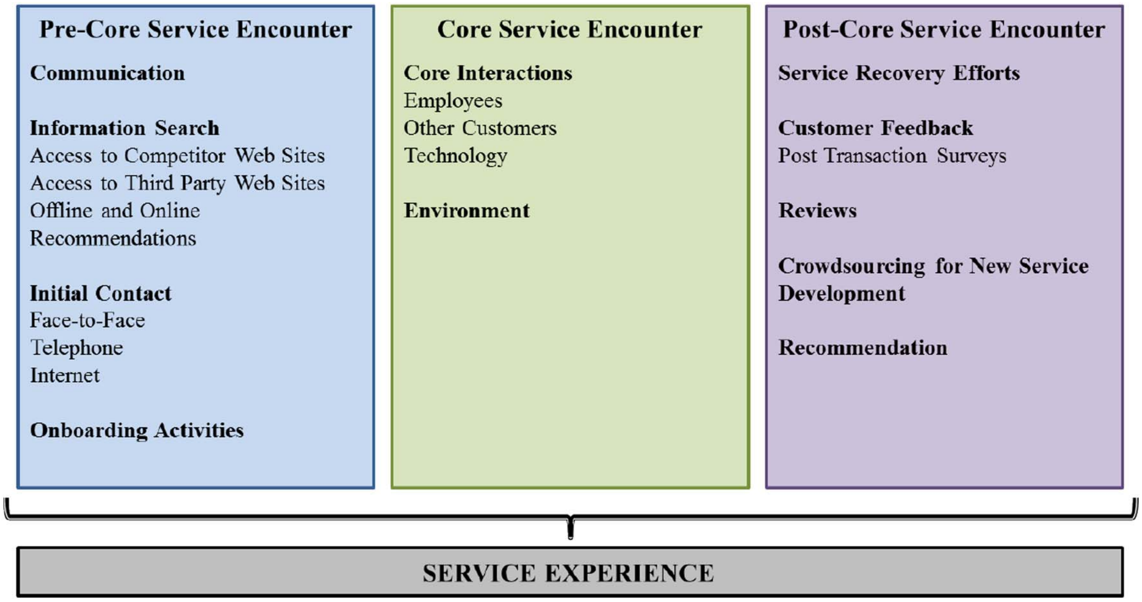

Fig. 1. Conceptual model of service encounters throughout the service experience.

preceding the core service encounter that focuses on leading customers to engage with the firm in the core-service encounter. This period may encompass multiple service encounters. Chronologically the first of three defined service experience stages, the pre-core encounter period has received less attention from service researchers, despite its suggested importance for customer loyalty (Bitner, 1995). Specifically, the pre-core encounter takes place when customers either begin reviewing information about a firm's offering or make initial contact with the firm. Instances of pre-core encounters include seeking information from online reviews, addressing initial and exploratory questions to frontline employees, and onboarding processes (see our research review). In terms of examples, this stage includes activities like orientation for students in new graduate programs, paperwork that precedes a doctor's appointment, reviewing information about a hotel on TripAdvisor, or interacting with Jetblue on Twitter prior to using this airline.

While there has been ample past research on consumer decision making prior to purchase, much of it has been product focused (Punj & Staelin, 1983; Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997) and set

Table 1
List of articles on core service encounter.

Citation	Primary topic	Key findings
Bitner (1995)	Service relationships as making and keeping promises	There are three key activities in service relationships: (1) Making Promises (External Marketing), (2) Keeping Promises (Interactive Marketing) (3) Enabling (Employees to keep) Promises (Internal Marketing). Not all encounters are equally important. Encounters early in a service experience tend to influence loyalty to a greater extent than others.
Bitner (1992)	Servicescapes: Physical surroundings and their influence on customer and employee behaviors	Service organizations can be categorized based on two dimensions: (1) physical complexity and (2) actor within servicescape (customer only, customer and employee, or employee only).
Bitner, Brown, & Meuter (2000)	Infusion of technology in service encounters	Customer involvement and the provision of alternatives in technology-infused service encounters are recommended in an effort to leverage technology to accomplish three goals: (1) customization and flexibility, (2) effective service recovery, and (3) spontaneous customer delight.
Moeller (2008)	Customer integration	Three stages of service provision are identified: facilities, transformation, and usage. The stages differ in terms of resource origin (company or customer), autonomy of decision-making (integrative or autonomous), and value (potential value, value-in-transformation, and value-in-use).
Sirianni, Bitner, Brown, and Mandel (2013)	Branded service encounters	Aligning employee behavior in service encounters with brand positioning improves brand evaluations and customer-based brand equity.
Pounders, Babin, and Close (2015)	Aesthetic labor, frontline employee appearance	A uniform appearance among frontline employees is effective when it brings feelings of similarity to customers.
Cronin, Brady, & Hult (2000)	Effects of service quality, service value, satisfaction, and perceived sacrifice on behavioral intentions (repatronage, recommendation intentions)	Simultaneous consideration of service quality, service value, and satisfaction reconciles previously fragmented streams of research on these constructs and their relationships. Service quality and service value have indirect effects on behavioral intentions.
Bitner, Ostrom, and Morgan (2008)	Service blueprinting	Service blueprinting is "a customer-focused approach for service innovation and service improvement" (p. 2). The portrayal of a service via this technique facilitates the design of service innovations.
Bolton et al. (2014)	Customer "journey" as opposed to core service exclusively as strategy	A holistic view of customer-firm interactions is called for.
Brady & Cronin (2001)	Measurement - perceived service quality	Within perceived service quality there are three dimensions: (1) outcome quality, (2) interaction quality, and (3) environmental quality. Each of the components need to be perceived as reliable, responsive, and empathetic.

Table 2
List of articles on pre-core service encounter.

Citation	Primary topic	Key findings
Zeithaml (1981)	Compares goods and services in terms of how they are evaluated, introduces search, experience, credence	The framework of search, experience, and credence qualities of goods (Nelson 1970; Darby and Karni 1973) is extended to services. Services are generally high in credence qualities, while goods are generally higher in search qualities, making the evaluation of services generally more difficult than the evaluation of goods.
Mitra et al. (1999)	S-E-C service types and perceived risk, information search	Perceived risk is lowest for search and highest for credence services. Customers informing credence service purchases take more information search time than either those informing search or experience services.
Mortimer and Pressey (2013)	S-E-C services and comparing credence services to non-credence (search, experience) services	Credence and non-credence service consumers do not differ in terms of the comprehensiveness of their information search, but credence service consumers use salespeople, friends, and consumer reports as information sources more than non-credence service consumers.
Bansal and Voyer (2000)	Moderators of WOM influence on purchase decision	Interpersonal Variables: When WOM is actively sought it has greater influence on purchase decision. The same is true for tie strength, and tie strength is directly related to how actively WOM is sought. Non-interpersonal Variables: Receiver expertise is negatively associated with risk, and greater risk is associated with more active search for WOM.
Keh and Pang (2010)	Service separation: "customers' absence from service production, which denotes the spatial separation between service production and consumption."	Service separation increases customers' perceptions of access convenience, benefit convenience, performance risk, and psychological risk. For credence services, the effects on convenience are mitigated, and the effects on risk are magnified.
Xie et al. (2011)	Influencer of information source (reviewer) credibility: Personal identifying information (PII)	Online reviews are perceived as more credible when reviewer personal identifying information (PII) is present. Ambivalent reviews accompanied by reviewer PII reduce booking intentions.

in the consumer behavior realm. Recent work by Moeller (2008) and Johnson et al. (2012) highlights the important interdependency between companies and customers in the decision-making process. Johnson et al. (2012) suggest examples of various strategies, or "nudges," a company could use to influence decision making in the pre-core process. Service encounters that occur during this time interval include various types of service information search, such as offline and online contact with other customers, taking recommendations, and reviewing online information sources (e.g., focal firm, competitor, third party websites, etc.). In fact, more and more of the choices consumers make involve the use of some form of information technology (Murray, Liang, & Häubl, 2010). Although some of the aforementioned service encounters have been addressed in extant research (e.g., Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Mitra, Reiss, & Capella, 1999; Mortimer & Pressey, 2013)—especially with the increased use of technology—future research in this area will benefit from the distinction of the pre-core service encounter period. The pre-core encounter ends when the delivery of the primary service offering begins. See Table 2 for a review of studies examining pre-core encounters.

Finally, the *post-core service encounter period* is defined as the time interval following the core service encounter during which consumers assess and act on their experience in the two previous periods. Through this period, the firm's goal is to retain customers and to improve future service experiences. Post-core encounters include, for instance, proactive firm activities (e.g., the receipt of a survey, a request for social media posting, etc.), any situations involving a complaint, or a firm's actions to sustain a relationship with the customer over time. If done properly, effective actions in the post-core service period can flow into future pre-core service encounters, thus extending the experience loop. Researchers have studied key encounters within this period, acknowledging the importance of the encounters following provision of the core service. Specifically, service recovery efforts (Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008; Smith & Bolton, 2002) and relationship development (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) are two topics that have received much attention in this field. In addition, this period includes promising topics, such as customer provision of feedback (i.e., via post-transaction surveys), customer reviews and service recommendations. Table 3 provides a listing of representative articles on post-core encounters.

3. Research review and agenda

While much service research has focused on the core, there is still the existence of a base of knowledge on how to conceptualize and manage both pre- and post-core encounters. In the following sections, we provide a more granular discussion of specific research in each area and then explicitly identify research questions that, if addressed, can advance knowledge in these areas. Table 4 provides a summary discussion of these major topics within each type of encounter as well as specific research questions within each topic area.

3.1. Pre-core service encounter

Establishing a clear cutoff for the end of the pre-core and the start of the core service is a challenge, and the lines governing these distinctions will continually evolve with customer expectations, technology and changes in customer behavior. However, at present, we have identified four topic areas that we think represent a variety of pre-core encounters. Specifically, we believe that awareness building activities, customers' information search, initial contact and onboarding phases all represent critical pre-core encounters that could impact the holistic service experience. Next, we briefly introduce initial research efforts in each of these four areas and then provide a discussion of important research questions for each of them.

3.1.1. Awareness building

3.1.1.1. Current knowledge. While brand awareness has been acknowledged as a dimension of brand equity across tangible goods and service contexts (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010), building service brand awareness has received less attention from researchers. Berry (2000) developed a model of service branding, highlighting brand meaning as the primary driver of brand equity. Berry explained that, in a service context, customer experience has greater influence on brand equity than brand communications and a company's presented brand; he ultimately viewed brand awareness as a secondary driver of brand

Table 3
List of articles on post-core service encounter.

Citation	Primary topic	Key findings
Watson et al. (2015)	Attitudinal, behavioral loyalty meta-analysis	Attitudinal and behavioral loyalty differ in terms of the effects of their antecedents (e.g., satisfaction) as well as their effects on behavioral versus objective performance outcomes.
Smith and Bolton (2002)	Emotional response to service failure, service recovery evaluations	Customers who respond with greater negative emotions to service failures tend to be less (cumulatively) satisfied.
Du, Fan, & Feng (2011)	Customer and employee emotions, service failure and recovery	During service failure, negative emotional displays on the part of employees increase customer negative emotions. During service recovery, displays of positive employee emotions can reduce negative emotions on the part of the customer.
Dong, Evans, & Zou (2008)	Co-created service recovery	Customer participation in service recovery drives value co-creation intentions through increased customer role clarity, perceptions of value for future co-creation, and satisfaction with the service recovery.
Gregoire, Tripp, & Legoux (2009)	Customer love becoming hate - revenge and avoidance	Over time, grudge-holding customers' desire for revenge decreases, and their desire for avoidance increases. These negative outcomes are stronger for customers who were engaged in stronger relationships, although compensation best offsets these effects for those customers.
Gregoire & Fisher (2008)	Customer betrayal, retaliation	In the context of an unsatisfactory recovery from a service failure, customer betrayal motivates retaliation. This effect is stronger in strong service relationships.
Joireman, Gregoire, Devezer, & Tripp (2013)	When do customers give firms “second chance”?	Customers may respond positively to failed service recoveries, as perceptions of a firm's motive mediates effect of service recovery failure on anger, desire for revenge, and desire for reconciliation.
Hess, Ganesan, & Klein (2003)	Service firm-customer relationships, service failure	Customer expectations of relationship continuity reduce the effects of service failure on post-recovery satisfaction with the service through reduced recovery expectation, as customers with greater continuity expectations attribute the failure to a more temporary cause.
Oliver (1999)	Customer loyalty vs. customer satisfaction	Customer loyalty is not a feasible outcome for certain product categories.
Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman (1996)	Effects of service quality on behavioral intentions	Service quality's effect on behavioral intentions varies across dimensions of behavioral intentions (loyalty, intentions to switch, willingness to pay more, complaining intentions).

equity. As recent research has retained brand awareness as an important factor in service brand equity (e.g., Marquardt, Golicic, & Davis, 2011), the distinctions between brand awareness and its achievement for services versus tangible goods have yet to be explored.

3.1.1.2. Research questions. There are some important questions that still need to be answered to further understand how to build awareness for services. The extant literature does not address how and whether there are differences in building awareness for services compared to more traditional products. Since customer expectations are being formed in the pre-core stage, future work should explore how awareness campaigns for services shape customer expectations. How can pre-core awareness initiatives create new moments of truth that have implications for later stages of the service delivery process? More specifically, can firms strategically manage those initial touchpoints to enhance consumers' desires for an offering, without inflating their expectations so high that it would be hard to satisfy them during the core experience? Similarly, in contexts where service literacy is needed, is it beneficial to make consumers aware of not just the service brand but details about the core service process? In these instances, firms may be able not only to attract, but also to better prepare consumers for a service.

In addition to the content of awareness building efforts, there are multiple channels and media that could be used to build awareness for services. Service research should explore how social media tools can be leveraged in service branding and building customer awareness. For instance, there are a growing number of virtual sales assistants that are designed to aid customers in their search for services. Future work should examine the differences in search engine marketing strategies needed for services (versus physical goods) given their high credence qualities. Another interesting area here would be to examine how effective online communities are at generating brand awareness. Work by Thompson and Sinha (2008) highlights different types of online communities and their impact on new product adoption. Future research should seek to understand how brand awareness is created in these various types of online communities.

3.1.2. Information search

3.1.2.1. Current knowledge. To date, the most prolific pre-core encounter research area focuses on service information search. Zeithaml (1981) initially contrasted services to products in terms of how they are evaluated by customers on the basis of the search, experience, and credence (S-E-C) qualities framework (these qualities are listed in ascending order of evaluation difficulty). This framework then served as the foundation for the S-E-C-based services typology in the subsequent literature on customer information search (Mitra et al., 1999). Research on information search has largely been concerned with customer perceived risk (Bansal & Voyer, 2000), review credibility (Keh & Pang, 2010; Xie, Miao, Kuo, & Lee, 2011), and outcomes such as purchase, repatronage and WOM intentions (Mitra et al., 1999). The S-E-C service typology defines service categories for which researchers have identified different drivers leading to different outcomes (e.g., Mitra et al., 1999) as well as moderators in more complex models of customer information search (Keh & Pang, 2010). Nonetheless, this stream of literature is limited and fragmented, yielding results that are difficult to generalize and reconcile (e.g., Mitra et al., 1999; Mortimer & Pressey, 2013).

3.1.2.2. Research questions. While there has been extensive research on information search, there are questions that still remain unanswered relating to information search, specifically for services. One possible direction for future research is to explore the different sources of information (personal, firm, etc.), and the different impact these sources have on customer expectations and service evaluations. Since there is a growing amount of information that customers may use to evaluate a service, firms need to know whether they can influence the relative importance of attributes during the information search, and how best to do this. While traditional information search was limited to a few key sources (firm sponsored media and consumer generated media), customers today have many new sources of information. Future research should examine the impact of these new sources, such as

Table 4
Research topics within and across pre-core, core, and post-core service encounters.

Topics	Important research questions
Pre-core service encounter	
Communication	● What are the most effective ways for firms to build awareness and effectively manage expectations? ● How can service firms leverage social media to develop a service brand and awareness? ● Are different search engine marketing strategies needed for services (versus physical goods) given their high credence qualities?
Information search	● Do sources of information (personal, firm, etc.) differentially impact customer expectations and ultimately evaluations of service? ● Can firms influence the relative importance of attributes during the information search phase? ● How can firms help low service literacy consumers gather better information and ultimately make better decisions?
Initial contact	● How important is the first touchpoint in driving conversion among consumers? ● What communication mediums are most effective for initial interfaces with consumers? ● To what extent can these initial conversations shape expectations for the customer journey?
Onboarding	● Are firm-prescribed onboarding activities beneficial in all situations or only in contexts when service literacy is important? ● What balance between local employees, technology, or the parent firm can provide the best onboarding experience? ● How can firms increase customer participation in onboarding efforts? ● Are onboarding activities relatively more important in B2B settings?
Connecting the core with the pre- and post-core service encounters	
Technological interdependencies	● What is the impact on customers and employees of high tech versus high touch service delivery across the encounters? ● What is the role of technology in value creation during different encounters? ● How can mobile technologies, Internet of Things and cloud-based systems enable the creation of seamless customer experiences across the encounters?
Organizational interdependencies	● How can the organization of the service provider entity – a firm or a network of firms – be designed to ensure adequate coordination (intra-firm and/or inter-firm) across the encounters? ● What extent of decoupling should be employed across the encounters? ● How should the interfaces between the core and the other encounters be designed in order to improve coordination?
Temporal interdependencies	● How can relevant customer information be captured and shared across encounters? ● How can firms manage expectations, satisfaction and emotions across encounters? ● To what extent does the customer state before or after the core impact the evaluation of the other encounters? ● How can information available in social media pertaining to the pre- and post-core be used to design and deliver the core? ● How can the information generated by Internet of Things and smart services in the core be employed to trigger and customize the post-core encounter?
Post-core service encounter	
Failure and recovery	● What are the unique effects of service failures caused by customers while using self-service technologies? ● What are the drivers of customer reconciliations?
Relationship building	● What is the impact of other customer's online reviews on others' decision making? ● What impact do managerial responses to these have on consideration? ● What are the aspects of an online review that have the most influence on decision-making? ● What is the process of explaining relationship dissolution? ● What is the impact of deviant consumer behavior in online communities?
Proactive firm activities	● What is the effect of unsolicited customer feedback on future customer behaviors? ● How do firms conceptualize and measure customer engagement? ● Once established, what are the key drivers of post-encounter engagement?

online communities, third-party review sites (i.e., Yelp, Trip Advisor, Amazon.com) and social networks. Also, firm strategies to influence service adoption must consider customer differences in service literacy; managers should not assume that all customers are capable of making complex service decisions. For example, how can firms help low service literacy consumers gather better information and ultimately make better decisions? In relation to this, when making decisions, Tversky and Shafir (1992) demonstrate that increased choice leads consumers to defer choices, even when the available options are all acceptable.

3.1.3. Initial contact

3.1.3.1. Current knowledge. The importance of a customer's first encounter with a firm has been acknowledged by researchers. The quality of this initial contact can retain or drive away customers. Initial contact may be made as part of a customer's information search and can take the form of a face-to-face, voice-to-voice, or computer-to-computer encounter (Whiting & Donthu, 2006). While initial contact with customers made by salespeople has received substantial research attention (e.g., Miao & Evans, 2013), little research has addressed the importance of this customer-initiated encounter that can vary in terms of its purpose and medium across service contexts.

3.1.3.2. Research questions. The initial contact is a critical area for the adoption and usage of a new service. As there are multiple touchpoints with customers, firms need to know how important the first touchpoint is in driving conversion among consumers, and how these initial contacts shape customer expectations. Specifically, is it better for firms to start with an average experience and continually increase the quality as they progress through the process? Moreover, how should the initial touchpoint be leveraged? Should service firms extract information from consumers about their ideal experience to better customize the service, or would this initiative inflate consumers' expectations, making it too difficult to deliver the promised service? Finally, recent research (Giebelhausen et al. 2014) demonstrates that consumers have different reactions to human versus technology-based service encounters, and future studies could extend this to better understand what types of media are most efficient at the beginning.

3.1.4. Onboarding

3.1.4.1. Current knowledge. As researchers have turned their attention from service encounters to service experiences (e.g., Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), customer onboarding—defined as the process of familiarizing a customer with a firm's service offering—has emerged as an important research area. How a firm initially engages with a customer to bring her or him into the service is crucial for future success. For example, Rawson, Duncan, and Jones (2013) highlight that a series of well-managed individual encounters may be insufficient to “onboard” a customer when ongoing issues remain unresolved. This result suggests that all encounters—at different time periods—should be simultaneously considered to understand onboarding decisions. All in all, customer onboarding is a process that should be prioritized for future research.

3.1.4.2. Research questions. While there is little academic research on service onboarding, practitioners have made onboarding an important step in the customer journey. For example, practitioner work in service operations demonstrates how digitization and technology are simplifying the customer onboarding experience in financial services (Desmet, Markovitch & Paquette, 2015). In addition, firms and customers are investing significant resources in onboarding activities without knowing whether such activities are necessary in all situations, or if they are most critical when service literacy is most important. Future research should explore the costs and benefits of onboarding activities across multiple service contexts. Customer service onboarding can be delivered through different mediums and channels. Future research should explore what the optimal balance of human interaction and technology in onboarding processes is, and how frontline employees can provide the best onboarding experience. From a firm's perspective, another interesting research stream should examine the impact of frontline employees on the customer onboarding process. Frontline employees play a major role in customers' choices to adopt a new service. Finally, for firms to capitalize on the investment in onboarding activities, it is important for research to address how firms can increase customer participation in onboarding efforts, and whether investing in onboarding is more important in business-to-business settings versus business-to-consumer services.

3.2. Connecting the core with the pre- and post-core service encounters

The core service encounter period, as defined above, captures the customer-firm interactions that constitute the provision of the main service offering. While prior research has captured this critical period in isolation, much less is known about its role in connecting the pre-core and post-core encounters and how these should match to create a seamless service experience. In this section, we focus on reviewing research that addresses the ability of the core to serve as a binding agent that holds together a service experience, providing avenues for future research to better understand the nature of this relationship.

3.2.1. Current knowledge

The inherent importance of the core service encounter period has been widely recognized. The research in this area has centered on the various interactions that take place during this period, particularly customer interactions with employees (Bowen & Schneider, 2014), other customers (Nicholls, 2010), and technology (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002). Additionally, the physical environment in which the core service encounter takes place has been found to influence these interactions and their outcomes (Bitner, 1992).

Service researchers have rightly acknowledged the importance of taking a holistic perspective on the customer journey, considering relevant interdependencies between sequential service encounters that contribute to the overall customer experience (Dhebar, 2013). Handoffs across consecutive encounters need to be carefully managed so that the customer does not fall through the cracks (Shapiro, Rangan, & Sviokla, 1992) and a seamless experience is provided (Ostrom et al., 2015). In fact, the customer experience has been defined as a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory and social responses to a firm's offerings over the purchase journey (e.g., Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Especially challenging handoffs are those that involve change in interactive technologies (e.g., channels) (Sousa & Voss, 2006), change in the organizational entity (function or firm) that provides the encounters (Zomerdijk & de Vries, 2007), and significant time lags (Dhebar, 2013). Research has emphasized the need to pay attention to the sequence of encounters that comprise the service experience and how customer emotions evolve across the encounters (Dasu & Chase, 2010). For example, all things being equal, it seems desirable to conclude a sequence of encounters on a high note or to get the unpleasant parts out of the way early. Designing encounters and journeys with these considerations in mind will deliver the desired implicit or psychological outcomes of the service (Sivakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014).

Research on encounter interdependencies has focused on the core service encounter period. It has typically analyzed customer journeys starting with the arrival of the customer into the core service delivery system (the "factory") and ending with check-out from this system, often neglecting the pre- and post-core periods. Both service providers and customers have very different goals and expectations for each of the three types of encounters. We argue that the interdependencies and handoffs between the core and the adjacent periods are especially challenging and have inherent characteristics that make them different from interdependencies across individual encounters within the core period.

First, in many of today's services, internet-based channels play a key role in the pre- and post-core encounters (Sousa, Amorim, Pinto, & Ana Magalhães, 2016). At the same time, a large number of core services require the physical presence of the customer (e.g., health care, hospitality) or the processing of an object provided by the customer (e.g., dry cleaning). Therefore, the transition into/from the core encounter often implies change between virtual and physical channels of customer interaction, enacting important *technological interdependencies*.

Second, the primary function involved in the delivery of the pre-core and post-core encounters is often marketing or sales, whereas the operations function is a key factor in the core encounters. In addition, the use of different interactive technologies across the three periods frequently leads to the dedication of different organizational entities (functions or firms) to the delivery of the encounters in each period. For example, customer acquisition in the pre-core may be subcontracted to a specialist firm or organizational unit operating as an internet-enabled contact center. This results in significant *organizational interdependencies* between the core and the other periods.

Finally, there are usually important time lags between the three periods, during which customer circumstances, states of mind, and emotions may change significantly. This is especially salient in research-shopping instances in which customers use the Internet for information searching in the pre-core, but then resort to a physical facility to experience the service (Neslin & Shankar, 2009). In this case, there may be long time lags between the two periods, enacting important *temporal interdependencies*.

3.2.2. Research questions

A number of important questions associated with interdependencies between the core and the adjacent encounters remain under-researched. We want to highlight some questions that we feel are of importance for each category of interdependencies.

Concerning *technological interdependencies*, future research should revisit extant knowledge on technological integration in the specific context of the three encounter periods. Examples include understanding the impact on customers and employees of high-tech versus high touch service delivery across the three encounters, and examining how mobile technologies, Internet of Things, and cloud-based systems can enable the creation of seamless customer experiences across the encounters (Ostrom et al., 2015; Wuenderlich et al., 2015).

With respect to *organizational interdependencies*, future research should explore new organizational designs for the service provider entity, which can be a firm or a network of firms. The service provider can create value platforms to help support the complete service process and thus create a seamless system for customers' value creation. Such designs need to explicitly consider the unique nature of the three encounters and ensure adequate organizational coordination (intra-firm and/or inter-firm) across them. The notion of competition based on end-to-end customer journeys, supported by a cross-functional team, and led by a "journey manager" may be a promising avenue to study (Edelman & Singer, 2015).

It is also important to study the extent of decoupling what is desirable across the three encounters. Decoupling is defined as organizationally separating activities by allocating them to different employees or groups of employees (Zomerdijk & de Vries, 2007). Highly coupled activities provide increased flexibility but do not take advantage of the ability to employ experts. Decoupling activities allows the subsystems to function independently and permits substitution of subsystems as needed to alter the system itself. Decoupled activities can be coordinated by designing appropriate service interfaces and by defining rules on what information to provide and to whom (de Blok, Meijboom, Luijkx, Schols, & Schroeder, 2014). Future research might apply these service design principles to the organizational entities that support the three encounters.

Regarding *temporal interdependencies*, there is the need to devise measurement systems that capture information in one period that is not only relevant to the design and execution of the encounters in that period but also in the other periods. Especially relevant may be to capture relevant customer information for all experiential dimensions (cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, behavioral) throughout the three encounters and to share it with the entities involved in the provision of each encounter. For example, a firm needs to know what goal or task a customer wants to solve using different channels or during different stages of the customer journey. Failure to achieve a goal is likely to lead to negative emotions, such as frustration, and will affect the overall perception of the firm. Firms also have a tendency to store customer information in silos within the organization. For instance, customer perceptions and behavior on the Internet are not matched to customer perceptions and behavior in a store or when contacting customer service. Matching customer information enables companies to create a greater understanding of the customer experience during a complete customer journey and allows the investigation of relevant research questions, such as: How can firms manage expectations, satisfaction and emotions across encounters? How can relevant customer information be captured and shared across encounters? What role does the core play in relaying information and managing consistent expectations? To what extent does the customer's state before or after the core impact the evaluation of the other encounters? How can information available in social media pertaining to the pre- and post-core be used to design and deliver the core? How can the information generated by Internet of Things and smart services in the core be employed to trigger and customize the post-core encounter?

3.3. Post-core service encounter

Traditionally, the service literature has somewhat overlooked the post-core encounter. The one notable exception is research on service failure and recovery. This focus likely emerged because this situation is often triggered by a customer complaint, throwing a post-core encounter back onto center stage. Beyond the literature on service failures, there are more opportunities in this area, particularly when researchers account for the roles the "pre-core" and "core" encounters could have on influencing customers in the post-core area. For example, Sridhar and Srinivasan (2012) demonstrate that product reviews that customers read (i.e., a pre-core encounter) impact their likelihood of sharing feedback following a transaction (i.e., a post-core encounter). In addition, a small set of "best in class" service organizations are proactively extending the service experience through the creation of new post-core encounters, such as posting "their memories" after vacations. In the following sections, we review different literatures—service failure and recovery, relationship development and firm-initiated contacts—examining post-core service encounters.

3.3.1. Service failure and recovery

3.3.1.1. Current knowledge. The literature on service failure and recovery examines the negative interactions after the "core" encounters. A service failure is a situation in which customers perceive that the "core service" delivery was below their expectations, whereas service recovery represents the efforts made to redress the initial failure. Most of this rich literature relies on a sequence "cognitions ➔ emotions ➔ outcomes," which we follow next.

The most studied cognitions refer to justice or attribution theories, which are the objects of several meta-analyses. After a service failure, a natural tendency is to ask "why" the incident occurred and to use different attributions to answer this question. Two of these attributions—stability and controllability—have been widely studied in marketing. In their meta-analysis, Van Vaerenbergh, Yves, Vermeir, and Larivière (2014) found, for instance, that controllability has a stronger and more immediate effect on negative emotions than stability does. In turn, justice theory has been widely employed for understanding customers' responses after a service recovery. Customers assess a firm's recovery efforts according to three justice dimensions (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekaran, 1998; Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999): distributive (i.e., outcomes), procedural (i.e., policies or procedures) and interactional (i.e., interactions with employees). In their meta-analysis, Gelbrich and Roschk (2011) found that only distributive justice affects transaction-specific satisfaction. However, all three dimensions influence long-term satisfaction, according to the meta-analysis conducted by Orsingher, Valentini, and de Angelis (2010).

For the affective variables, research focusing on satisfaction (transaction-specific and overall) has dominated this literature (e.g., Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). More recently, research started paying attention to negative emotions as mediators between cognitions and satisfaction (and other outcomes). Initially, researchers focused on general sets of negative emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005). Recently, more emphasis has been put on discrete emotions, such as anger (i.e., Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010) and rage (McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, & Brady, 2009). This literature now incorporates outcomes that go beyond Singh's (1988) typology of complaint behaviors (i.e., voice, private and third-party responses). With the advent of social media, research has begun paying attention to responses such as online complaints, revenge and vengeance (Grégoire et al., 2010; Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

3.3.1.2. Research questions. It would be interesting to understand the effects of locus of causality (Folkes, 1984), especially when customers are responsible for service failures with self-service technologies. This issue directly speaks to the notion of co-creation when customers recover on their own from a service failure in an online setting. A largely unexplored area suggests that customers could favorably respond to successful recoveries. Researchers could study positive emotions, such as joy and happiness, and other favorable outcomes, such as gratitude, acceptance, indebtedness, reconciliation and forgiveness. We could better understand the drivers leading to forgiveness and reconciliation—two beneficial outcomes for managers.

In terms of recovery, it is generally assumed that firms are fully responsible for satisfying customers after a failure. Here, there is an opportunity to study the initiatives that customers could take to "heal themselves" after major failures. From research on clinical psychology, customers could benefit from using self-expressive tools to vent their negative emotions and restructure the negative events. The use of such tools would be especially useful for highly personal failures (e.g., healthcare).

3.3.2. Building stronger relationships

3.3.2.1. Current knowledge. There is a rich literature that discusses positive post-core interactions and the development of strong relationships—which are broadly defined as the psychological connections customers perceive that they have with firms. These connections has been qualified by using numerous concepts. From this long list, trust and commitment arguably remain the cornerstones of strong relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust reflects the extent to which customers believe that a firm is dependable and reliable. In turn, commitment is defined as a customer's enduring desire to maintain his or her relationship with a firm. Building on these two concepts, authors have proposed different conceptualizations of relationship quality, a second-order construct that measures the instrumental (and "self-neutral") value of a relationship (Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2011).

Beyond relationship quality, research has also paid special attention to self-defining connections that allow customers to fulfill deeper psychological needs (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). For example, the concepts of identification (i.e., the extent to which a relationship satisfies important identity needs) and love (i.e., the degree of passionate emotional attachment to a brand) satisfy psychological needs that go beyond solving consumption problems. These relationships are arguably the strongest, and they may lead to the most extreme positive and negative responses (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008).

This literature has recently incorporated the notion of customer engagement—a relatively broad concept that captures specific activities that customers can take in favor of a firm (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Whereas a relationship is fundamentally attitudinal, the notion of engagement emphasizes measurable behavioral responses (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Specifically, Pansari and Kumar (2016) define customer engagement "as the mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm through direct contribution (i.e., purchase and retention) and indirect contribution (i.e., referrals, social media interventions and feedback/suggestion)" (p. 2). It should be noted that customers typically engage in these specific behaviors after going through the "core" service encounter.

3.3.2.2. Research questions. First, the current literature focuses mainly on the effects of one's "own" interactions in creating one's "own" relationship. Given the advent of social media, it is now possible to witness others' interactions with a firm; it is important to better understand how others' exchanges affect one's relationship. We also need to better understand the linkage between customer relationship and engagement. Is customer relationship a part of engagement? Relationship could also be modeled as an antecedent or an outcome of engagement. The linkage between these two central constructs needs to be better specified in the literature.

There is also a need for more research to better understand relationship termination and dissolution. So far, the focus has been on developing strong relationships, and only limited research relates to relationship dissolution; managers still need to know how to manage this final state of the lifetime cycle (Harmeling, Palmatier, Houston, Arnold, & Samaha, 2015).

3.3.3. Proactive firm activities – customer feedback and firm solicitation

3.3.3.1. Current knowledge. While past research has examined how firms can react to both their successful and failed activities, there is also a new and expanding research on their proactive activities. For instance, firms can solicit customer feedback to engage them, regardless of the success or failure of past interactions. Proactive solicitation of feedback refers to firm-initiated communications that seek customer feedback on their offerings (Challagalla, Venkatesh, & Kohli, 2009). Past research has shown that asking customers for feedback influences customers' attitudes and behaviors in important ways (Malhotra, 2007). There are three core areas in this research realm: mere measurement effect, soliciting negative feedback, and soliciting positive feedback.

Research has demonstrated that simply measuring consumers' intentions impacts actual behavior (Morwitz, Johnson, & Schmittlein, 1993). Past research in this area has shown that the simple act of having customers complete a close-ended survey influences future behaviors (e.g., Fitzsimons & Morwitz, 1996). For instance, when customers are asked to provide feedback on their experiences, they rate their interactions as more efficacious and satisfying (Berry & Leighton, 2003; Morrison & Bies, 1991; Ping, 1993).

When it comes to soliciting feedback, the vast majority of academic research has focused on negative feedback in the form of complaining behavior (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987; Sampson, 1996; Voorhees, Brady, & Horowitz, 2006). These authors demonstrated that when customers felt the company wanted negative feedback, they gave an extra critical assessment, and consequently put greater weight on negative events. More recently, researchers started to examine the impact of asking customers to talk about the positive aspects of their experiences. When examining the impact of soliciting positive feedback, Bone et al. (2017) demonstrated that companies increase their sales when they start a survey by asking customers to recall something positive. The solicitation of positive feedback guides a customer's memories in a way that stimulates the formation of positive attitudes.

3.3.3.2. Research questions. While considerable work has examined the impact of solicited feedback, there has been little work examining the effect of unsolicited customer feedback. What is the impact of customers who voluntarily reach out to the firm with positive and/or negative feedback? In a similar vein, Fombelle, Bone, and Lemon (2016) examine customers who voluntarily reach out to the firm with ideas or suggestions (innovations). Further research should also examine the impact customer feedback has on other customers. The prevalence of online communities has exploded in recent years, but little research has examined the spillover effect on other customers who can observe the interactions. Further, research also needs to examine the impact of deviant consumer behaviors in these online communities.

4. Managing resources across the entire service experience

To this point, we have largely discussed how pre-core and post-core encounters operate in isolation, and the connections between these two types of encounters and the core service encounter. However, as previously noted, customers do not simply make assessments of service encounters; rather, they develop summary judgments of a firm based on all encounters that make up the service experience. This creates both challenges and opportunities for firms. Specifically, many firms can deliver excellence in the core, but may be suboptimal with pre- and post-core encounters because of a narrowed focus on the core encounter. In these instances, the lack of a complete quality service portfolio may leave customers dissatisfied and willing to switch. In parallel, a firm that can deliver all phases of the experience better than its competitors could realize benefits that far exceed those associated with a strong core encounter performance. As a result, it would be remiss to discuss a research agenda on the notions of encounter and experience without accounting for the potential of variance across the three encounter stages and their impact on customer evaluations. Fig. 2 provides a graphical depiction of different models that show variance across encounters.

4.1. Current service operations versus ideal standards

Specifically, the first panel (i.e., model 1) details our description of what we believe captures the current norm in the service industry; firms are delivering excellence in the core, but not fully leveraging the opportunities presented in the pre- and post-core encounters. As previously discussed, this approach could be risky. If competitors can gravitate toward our "Ideal" model (i.e., model 2) and provide improved performance across the board (i.e., pre-core-post), they would be able to capture customer share. In fact, we would contend that even delivering consistent, but slighter lower performance scores than those captured in our ideal setting could offer competitive gains over current practice and norms. Formal research investigations are needed to better understand the relative impact of the pre-core, core and post-core encounters on customer loyalty. Future research should also examine if variance across different types of encounters can erode evaluations of the experience. While most firms might obtain optimal benefits from delivering service just shy of ideal standards, the delivery of consistently excellent encounters (i.e., model 2) might be required

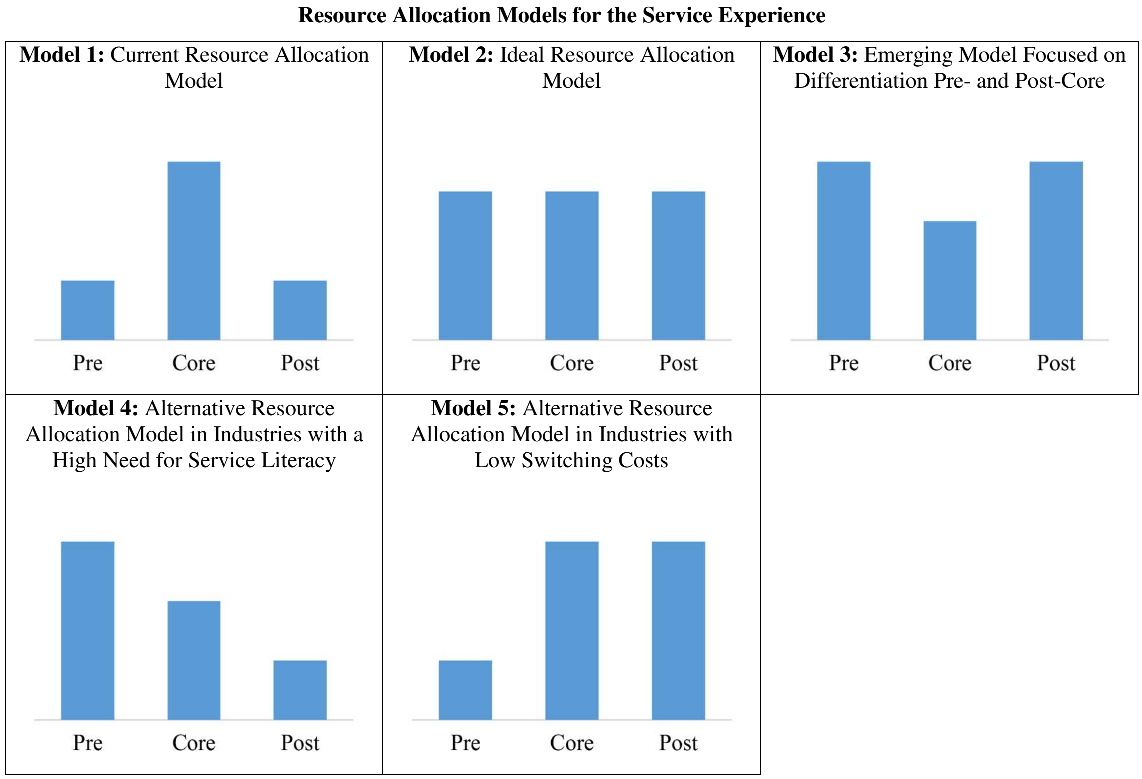

Fig. 2. Resource allocation models for the service experience.

for firms operating in luxury markets or for those seeking to be "best in class."

4.2. Alternative models

4.2.1. Emerging model

The obvious move is to become ideal across the board and to do so in a manner that takes into account cost constraints. However, this ideal setting is likely not going to be realistic for many firms that simply cannot invest to become "best in class" in all major encounters. In these instances, where resources are constrained, it is likely they could experience differentiation in the pre- and post-core encounters with their limited budgets. An approach that assumes a good core experience and places a premium on differentiating in the "pre" and "post" stages is what we refer to as the emerging model (i.e., model 3). Firms could be motivated to adopt this model simply to take a run at being "best in class," compared to the competition or for more tactical considerations.

In some contexts, the pre- and post-core encounters have increased importance to the extent that failure to deliver excellence at these stages could drastically erode the overall evaluation of the service experience. For example, when service literacy is critical, as in healthcare settings or financial services, over-investing in the pre-core experience (see model 4) could help individuals become better customers and obtain better outcomes as they move through the experience (i.e., "core" and "post-core"). In addition to this approach, other firms have successfully differentiated in either the pre-core or the post-core, and their excellence in these domains has created competitive advantages. For example, Amazon is renowned for its recommendation agents who help with awareness building among their customers, and this firm triggers more spending and increased satisfaction through better calibrated selections. Moreover, Zappos' return policy and other post-core interactions are designed to ensure that every customer walks away satisfied with his or her transaction and creates exit barriers among the company's base. These are just a couple of examples of firms' differentiating with the emerging model. More research is needed to better explain how and when these emerging approaches can impact customers' overall evaluation of their experience as well as their spending.

4.2.2. Other models for high and low switching costs

Alternatively, in industries that are dominated with high switching costs and often bind customers through contracts, an ideal model (see model 4) would likely feature an over-investment in pre-core encounters to build awareness, send positive quality signals to new customers, and onboard them into the relationship. Once this happens, contractual obligations can retain behavioral loyalty and firms could potentially divest in the core experience relative to the pre-core spending. A model like this would be common in telecommunications, insurance, and financial services.

In industries characterized by low switching costs (e.g., fast food or retail), delivering excellence in the core and post-core encounters (see model 5) becomes essential to preventing customers from switching to a competitor. In such industries, in which customers can easily find an alternative, it becomes crucial to build an effective complaint management system through which recoveries are effectively offered. In these industries, firms have to ensure that customer satisfaction is sustained; any service failure (which is not associated with a proper recovery) would be the equivalent of losing a customer. We argue that an approach focusing on the post-core encounter would allow firms (evolving in such environments) to save on traditional pre-core investments; these firms could capitalize simply on location and prior experience and then earn their attitudinal loyalty through personalized interactions in the core and post-core encounters.

4.2.3. Toward a testable framework

On the basis of this discussion, we encourage future research to develop models and hypotheses predicting the relative levels of resources that firms should invest in the three stages of encounter. The first efforts should be devoted to identifying the key drivers that explain the variations in these relative levels of investment. From our observations, we conclude that many of these drivers primarily relate to the competitive situation of a firm and the characteristics of its customers. In terms of competitive situation, we have already discussed the potential effects of variables such as entry barriers, exit barriers and switching cost environment (high versus low). In terms of demand characteristics, key variables—such as need for information, level of service literacy and the perceived risks associated with a service—are probably natural drivers explaining the relative levels of investments in the three encounter stages. Last but not least, it is important to test the effects of different resource configurations on firm performance.

5. Call to action

As the service discipline continues to evolve, researchers must expand their lens beyond the core experience. Historically, researchers have obsessed over the core service encounter, and decades of research have informed optimization efforts for those moments when the customer is "in the factory." While these investments have resulted in gains in service excellence, they have also resulted in a form of service myopia, with too much emphasis on the core service encounters and not enough focus on the pre-core and post-core encounters. Specifically, by narrowly focusing on the core, researchers are missing opportunities to apply service theories and principles to the pre- and post-core encounters, where best-in-class firms are already beginning to differentiate. Ultimately, without widening our lens, service research runs the risk of becoming less relevant in the future.

References

Alderson, W. (1965). *Dynamic marketing behavior*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Bansal, H. S., & Voyer, P. A. (2000). Word-of-mouth processes within a services purchase decision context. *Journal of Service Research*, *3*(2), 166–177.

Beaujean, M., Davidson, J., & Madge, S. (2006). The "moment of truth" in customer service. *Mckinsey Quarterly*, *1*, 62–73.

Berry, L. L. (2000). Cultivating service brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *28*(1), 128–137.

Berry, L. L., & Leighton, J. A. (2003). Restoring customer confidence. *Marketing Health Services*, *24*(1), 14–19.

Bhattacharya, C. B., Rao, H., & Glynn, M. A. (1995). Understanding the bond of identification: An investigation of its correlates among art museum members. *The Journal of Marketing*, 46–57.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 69–82.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *The Journal of Marketing*, 57–71.

Bitner, M. J. (1995). Building service relationships: It's all about promises. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *23*(4), 246–251.

Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Tetreault, M. S. (1990). The service encounter: Diagnosing favorable and unfavorable incidents. *The Journal of Marketing*, 71–84.

Bitner, M. J., Brown, S. W., & Meuter, M. L. (2000). Technology infusion in service encounters. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *28*(1), 138–149.

Bitner, M. J., & Hubbert, A. R. (1994). Encounter satisfaction versus overall satisfaction versus quality. *Service Quality: New directions in theory and practice*, *34*, 72–94.

Bitner, M. J., Ostrom, A. L., & Morgan, F. N. (2008). Service blueprinting: A practical technique for service innovation. *California management review*, *50*(3), 66–94.

Bitner, M. J., & Wang, H. S. (2014). 11. Service encounters in service marketing research. *Handbook of service marketing research*, *221*.

de Blok, C., Meijboom, B., Luijkx, K., Schols, J., & Schroeder, R. (2014). Interfaces in service modularity: A typology developed in modular health care provision. *Journal of operations management*, *32*(4), 175–189.

Bolton, R. N., & Drew, J. H. (1992). Mitigating the effect of service encounters. *Marketing Letters*, *3*(1), 57–70.

Bolton, R. N., Gustafsson, A., McColl-Kennedy, J., Sirianni, N. J., & Tse, D. K. (2014). Small details that make big differences: A radical approach to consumption experience as a firm's differentiating strategy. *Journal of Service Management*, *25*(2), 253–274.

Bone, S. A., Lemon, K. N., Voorhees, C. M., Liljenquist, K. A., Fombelle, P. W., Detienne, K. B., & Bruce Money, R. (2017). "Mere measurement plus": How solicitation of open-ended positive feedback influences customer purchase behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *54*(1), 156–170.

Bowen, D. E., & Schneider, B. (2014). A service climate synthesis and future research agenda. *Journal of Service Research*, *17*(1), 5–22.

Brady, M. K., & Joseph Cronin, J., Jr. (2001). Some new thoughts on conceptualizing perceived service quality: a hierarchical approach. *Journal of marketing*, *65*(3), 34–49.

Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, *17*(2), 79–89.

Challagalla, G., Venkatesh, R., & Kohli, A. K. (2009). Proactive postsales service: When and why does it pay off? *Journal of Marketing*, *73*(2), 70–87.

Chebat, J.-C., & Slusarczyk, W. (2005). How emotions mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*(5), 664–673.

Cronin, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, G. T. M. (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. *Journal of Retailing*, *76*(2), 193–218.

Dabholkar, P. A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2002). An attitudinal model of technology-based self-service: Moderating effects of consumer traits and situational factors. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *30*(3), 184–201.

Dasu, S., & Chase, R. B. (2010). Designing the soft side of customer service. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *52*(1), 33.

Desmet, D., Markovitch, S., & Paquette, C. (2015). *Speed and scale: Unlocking digital value in customer journeys*. McKinsey Insights and Publications Available at: http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/operations/speed_and_scale_unlocking_digital_value_in_customer_journeys (accessed January 2016).

Dhebar, A. (2013). Toward a compelling customer touchpoint architecture. *Business Horizons*, *56*(2), 199–205.

Dong, B., Evans, K. R., & Zou, S. (2008). The effects of customer participation in co-created service recovery. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 123–137.

Du, J., Fan, X., & Feng, T. (2011). Multiple emotional contagions in service encounters. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *39*(3), 449–466.

Edelman, D. C., & Singer, M. (2015). Competing on customer journeys. *Harvard Business Review*, 88–100.

Fitzsimons, G. J., & Morwitz, V. G. (1996). The effect of measuring intent on brand-level purchase behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *23*(1), 1–11.

Fließ, S., & Kleinaltenkamp, M. (2004). Blueprinting the Service Company - Managing Service Processes Efficiently. *Journal of Business Research*, *57*(4), 392–404.

Folkes, V. S. (1984). Consumer reactions to product failure: An attributional approach. *Journal of consumer research*, *10*(4), 398–409.

Fombelle, P. W., Bone, S. A., & Lemon, K. N. (2016). Responding to the 98%: Face-enhancing strategies for dealing with rejected customer ideas. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *44*(6), 685–706.

Fornell, C., & Wernerfelt, B. (1987). Defensive marketing strategy by customer complaint management: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 337–346.

Gelbrich, Katja, & Roschk, Holger (2011). A meta-analysis of organizational complaint handling and customer responses. *Journal of Service Research*, *14*(1), 24–43.

Giebelhausen, Michael, Robinson, Stacey G., Siriani, Nancy, & Brady, Michael (2014). "Touch vs. *Tech: When Technology Functions as a Barrier or a Benefit to Service Encounters, Journal of Marketing*, *78*(4), 113–124.

Grégoire, Y., & Fisher, R. J. (2008). Customer betrayal and retaliation: When your best customers become your worst enemies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(2), 247–261.

Grégoire, Y., Laufer, D., & Tripp, T. M. (2010). A comprehensive model of customer direct and indirect revenge: Understanding the effects of perceived greed and customer power. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*(6), 738–758.

Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T. M., & Legoux, R. (2009). When customer love turns into lasting hate: The effects of relationship strength and time on customer revenge and avoidance. *Journal of Marketing*, *73*(6), 18–32.

Gustafsson, A., Aksoy, L., Brady, M. K., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Sirianni, N. J., Witell, L., & Wuenderlich, N. V. (2015). Conducting service research that matters. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 425–429.

Grönroos, C. (1998). Marketing services: The case of a missing product. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *13*(4/5), 322–338.

Harmeling, C. M., Palmatier, R. W., Houston, M. B., Arnold, M. J., & Samaha, S. A. (2015). Transformational relationship events. *Journal of Marketing*, *79*(5), 39–62.

Hess, R. L., Ganesan, S., & Klein, N. M. (2003). Service failure and recovery: The impact of relationship factors on customer satisfaction. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *31*(2), 127–145.

Johnson, A. R., Matear, M., & Thomson, M. (2011). A coal in the heart: Self-relevance as a post-exit predictor of consumer anti-brand actions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *38*(1), 108–125.

Johnson, E. J., Shu, S. B., Dellaert, B. G., Fox, C., Goldstein, D. G., Häubl, G., ... Wansink, B. (2012). Beyond nudges: Tools of a choice architecture. *Marketing Letters*, *23*(2), 487–504.

Joireman, J., Grégoire, Y., Devezer, B., & Tripp, T. M. (2013). When do customers offer firms a "second chance" following a double deviation? The impact of inferred firm motives on customer revenge and reconciliation. *Journal of Retailing*, *89*(3), 315–337.

Keh, H. T., & Pang, J. (2010). Customer reactions to service separation. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*(2), 55–70.

Kimpakorn, N., & Tocquer, G. (2010). Service brand equity and employee brand commitment. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *24*(5), 378–388.

Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, *80*(6), 69–96.

Löfgren, M. (2005). Winning at the first and second moments of truth: An exploratory study. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, *15*(1), 102–115.

Malhotra, N. K. (2007). *Fundamentals of marketing research*. Sage.

Marquardt, A. J., Golicic, S. L., & Davis, D. F. (2011). B2B services branding in the logistics services industry. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *25*(1), 47–57.

McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Gustafsson, A., Jaakkola, E., Klaus, P., Radnor, Z. J., Perks, H., & Friman, M. (2015). Fresh perspectives on customer experience. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 430–435.

McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Patterson, P. G., Smith, A. K., & Brady, M. K. (2009). Customer rage episodes: Emotions, expressions and behaviors. *Journal of Retailing*, *85*(2), 222–237.

Miao, C. F., & Evans, K. R. (2013). The interactive effects of sales control systems on salesperson performance: A job demands–resources perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(1), 73–90.

Mitra, K., Reiss, M. C., & Capella, L. M. (1999). An examination of perceived risk, information search and behavioral intentions in search, experience and credence services. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *13*(3), 208–228.

Moeller, S. (2008). Customer integration—A key to an implementation perspective of service provision. *Journal of Service Research*, *11*(2), 197–210.

Moorthy, S., Ratchford, B. T., & Talukdar, D. (1997). Consumer information search revisited: Theory and empirical analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *23*(4), 263–277.

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 20–38.

Morrison, E. W., & Bies, R. J. (1991). Impression management in the feedback-seeking process: A literature review and research agenda. *Academy of Management Review*, *16*(3), 522–541.

Mortimer, K., & Pressey, A. (2013). Consumer information search and credence services: Implications for service providers. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *27*(1), 49–58.

Morwitz, V. G., Johnson, E., & Schmittlein, D. (1993). Does measuring intent change behavior? *Journal of Consumer Research*, *20*(1), 46–61.

Murray, K. B., Liang, J., & Häubl, G. (2010). ACT 2.0: The next generation of assistive consumer technology research. *Internet Research*, *20*, 232–254.

Neslin, S. A., & Shankar, V. (2009). Key issues in multichannel customer management: Current knowledge and future directions. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *23*(1), 70–81.

Nicholls, R. (2010). New directions for customer-to-customer interaction research. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *24*(1), 87–97.

Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *The Journal of Marketing*, 33–44.

Orsingher, C., Valentini, S., & de Angelis, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of satisfaction with complaint handling in services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*(2), 169–186.

Ostrom, A. L., Parasuraman, A., Bowen, D. E., Patricio, L., Voss, C. A., & Lemon, K. (2015). Service research priorities in a rapidly changing context. *Journal of Service Research*, *18*(2), 127–159.

Pansari, A., & Kumar, V. (2016). Customer engagement: the construct, antecedents, and consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 1–18.

Ping, R. A. (1993). The effects of satisfaction and structural constraints on retailer exiting, voice, loyalty, opportunism, and neglect. *Journal of retailing*, *69*(3), 320–352.

Pounders, K. R., Babin, B. J., & Close, A. G. (2015). All the same to me: Outcomes of aesthetic labor performed by frontline service providers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(6), 670–693.

Punj, G. N., & Staelin, R. (1983). A model of consumer information search behavior for new automobiles. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *9*(4), 366–380.

Rawson, A., Duncan, E., & Jones, C. (2013). The truth about customer experience. *Harvard Business Review*, *91*(9), 90–98.

Sampson, S. E. (1996). Ramifications of monitoring service quality through passively solicited customer feedback. *Decision Sciences*, *27*(4), 601.

Shapiro, B., Rangan, V., & Sviokla, J. (1992). Staple yourself to an order. *Harvard Business Review*, *70*, 113–122.

Singh, J. (1988). Consumer complaint intentions and behavior: Definitional and taxonomical issues. *The Journal of Marketing*, 93–107.

Sirianni, N. J., Bitner, M. J., Brown, S. W., & Mandel, N. (2013). Branded service encounters: Strategically aligning employee behavior with the brand positioning. *Journal of Marketing*, *77*(6), 108–123.

Sivakumar, K., Li, M., & Dong, B. (2014). Service quality: The impact of frequency, timing, proximity, and sequence of failures and delights. *Journal of Marketing*, *78*(1), 41–58.

Smith, A. K., & Bolton, R. N. (2002). The effect of customers' emotional responses to service failures on their recovery effort evaluations and satisfaction judgments. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *30*(1), 5–23.

Smith, A. K., Bolton, R. N., & Wagner, J. (1999). A model of customer satisfaction with service encounters involving failure and recovery. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 356–372.

Sousa, R., Amorim, M., Pinto, G., & Ana Magalhães, A. (2016). Multi-channel deployment: A methodology for the design of multi-channel service processes. *Production Planning & Control*, *27*(4), 312–327.

Sousa, R., & Voss, C. A. (2006). Service quality in multichannel services employing virtual channels. *Journal of Service Research*, *8*(4), 356–371.

Sridhar, S., & Srinivasan, R. (2012). Social influence effects in online product ratings. *Journal of Marketing*, *76*(5), 70–88.

Tax, S. S., Brown, S. W., & Chandrashekaran, M. (1998). Customer evaluations of service complaint experiences: Implications for relationship marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 60–76.

Thompson, S. A., & Sinha, R. K. (2008). Brand communities and new product adoption: The influence and limits of oppositional loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, *72*(6), 65–80.

Tversky, A., & Shafir, E. (1992). Choice under conflict: The dynamics of deferred decision. *Psychological Science*, *3*(6), 358–361.

Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P., & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research*, *13*(3), 253–266.

Vaerenbergh, V., Yves, C. O., Vermeir, I., & Larivière, B. (2014). A meta-analysis of relationships linking service failure attributions to customer outcomes. *Journal of Service Research*, *17*(4), 381–398.

Voorhees, C. M., Brady, M. K., & Horowitz, D. M. (2006). A voice from the silent masses: An exploratory and comparative analysis of noncomplainers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *34*(4), 514–527.

Voorhees, C., Fombelle, P., Allen, A. M., Bone, S. A., & Aach, J. (2014). *Managing post-purchase moments of truth: Leveraging customer feedback to increase loyalty*. MSI Reports. Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.

Ward, J. C., & Ostrom, A. L. (2006). Complaining to the masses: The role of protest framing in customer-created complaint web sites. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *33*(2), 220–230.

Watson, I. V., George, F., Joshua, T., Beck, C., Henderson, M., & Palmatier, R. W. (2015). Building, measuring, and profiting from customer loyalty. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(6), 790–825.

Whiting, A., & Donthu, N. (2006). Managing voice-to-voice encounters reducing the agony of being put on hold. *Journal of Service Research*, *8*(3), 234–244.

Woodside, A. G., Frey, L. L., & Daly, R. T. (1989). Linking service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intention. *Journal of Health Care Marketing*, *9*(4), 5–17.

Wuenderlich, N. V., Heinonen, K., Ostrom, A. L., Patricio, L., Sousa, R., Voss, C., & Lemmink, J. G. A. M. (2015). "Futurizing" smart service: implications for service researchers and managers. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 442–447.

Xie, H. J., Miao, L., Kuo, P.-J., & Lee, B.-Y. (2011). Consumers' responses to ambivalent online hotel reviews: The role of perceived source credibility and pre-decisional disposition. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *30*(1), 178–183.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1981). How consumer evaluation processes differ between goods and services. In JH, & W. R. George (Eds.), *Marketing services* (pp. 191–199). Chicago: American Marketing Association.

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *The Journal of Marketing*, 31–46.

Zomerdijk, L. G., & de Vries, J. (2007). Structuring front office and back office work in service delivery systems: an empirical study of three design decisions. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *27*(1), 108–131.