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## **RESEARCH PROJECT**

### ***“Brand Experience” a systematic literature review and empirical investigation”***

The brand experience constitutes a primary focus of analysis in consumer research (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Thompson et al. 1989; Schmitt, 1999; Arnould and Thompson, 2005), in the managerial practice for physical products (Hock 1986, 2002; Tse e Lee, 1993), services (Bitner 1992; Winsted, 1997), tourism (Otto, 1996; Wang, 1999) and retailing (Hibbert et al., 2001; Ballantine et al., 2010).

Moreover, for the Marketing Science Institute (<http://www.msi.org/research/2014-2016-research-priorities/>) the “brand experience” is one of the research priority in 2016.

The research on brand experience is still at a nascent stage. Despite notable studies have provided relevant and compelling definitions and operationalization of the brand experience construct (Schmitt 1999; Brakus et al., 2009) we still have little knowledge and understanding of the nomological properties of these construct and of the theoretical perspective through which the concept of brand experience should be approached. For example, it is not clear if consumers’ brand experience varies at different phases of the purchasing process (before, during and after the purchase) (Brakus et al., 2009; Brakus, Schmitt e Zhang, 2008; Arnould, Price e Zinkhan, 2002; Holbrook, 2000).

The motives behind these shortcomings are largely attributable to a scarce anchorage of the brand experience construct to specific theoretical perspectives through which the brand experience concept is tackled. As instance, while individual lived experiences should be phenomenologically investigated (Thompson et al. 1989), the major parts of studies on brand experience available to date adopt positivistic methods of enquiry and look at the ability of brand related stimuli to generate different levels of brand experience and/or at how consumers’ react to these stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009).

Given these gaps, the aim of this research project is to map the available literature on brand experience and to propose a research agenda based on a post-structuralist conceptualization of brand experience. To do so, the first phase of this project requires a systematic literature review of “brand experience” phenomenon; the second phase will focus on an empirical analysis in order to validate the literature review.

During the first phase of the project, the researcher will have to conduct a systematic literature review. The systematic literature review has been defined as an evidence-based tool for scientific knowledge creation, both in medical (Greenhalgh, 1997; Davies and Crombie, 1998), and social sciences (Denyer and Neely, 2004; Tranfield et al., 2003; Rousseau et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2011).

Systematic reviews follow a rigorous, clear and transparent method of data collection and analysis, ensuing reliable, replicable and synthetic results (Tranfield et al., 2003). Moreover, systematic literature reviews help in identifying the communalities and differences in researches studying a specific phenomenon, enlightening the established and replicable results and thus evidences of new scientific knowledge (Rousseau et al., 2008; Tranfield et al., 2003).

Finally, in accordance to recent systematic literature reviews this researcher will follow the path traced by Jones et al. (2011), using a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), an inductive method to study and inquiry qualitative evidences and researches.

During the second phase of this research project - the empirical analysis-, the researcher will apply a multiple case study methodology. Thus the researcher will have to select significant cases (Yin, 1994), able to describe the “brand experience” phenomenon in a depth and rich way (Siggelkow, 2007).

Through a theoretical sampling method (Eisenhardt e Graebner, 2007; Eisenhardt, 1989), the multiple case study is of particular relevance to explore, extend and elaborate the existing theory, both in terms of concepts and in terms of relationships between theory components (Eisenhardt e Graebner, 2007). Moreover, the multiple case study methodology enhances the reliability, validity and replicability of results (Eisenhardt e Graebner, 2007).

The second phase of this research project encompasses also a triangulated research strategy, and thus interviews (Strauss e Corbin, 1990; Thompson, 1997), informal discussion (Carù and Cova, 2007) and ethnographic analysis (Kozinets, 2002). This triangulated research strategy is relevant for a richer theory development (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).