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A CRX framework and tools to design for relationships in service settings

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Abstract

This paper presents a framework and tools to improve—by design—relationships between customers and large-scale service organisations. Up to now, several attempts have been made in both academia and practice to improve these relationships, but so far approaches such as relationship marketing and customer relationship management have failed to deliver on their theoretical promise. Several design studies and projects have pointed to more pragmatic new directions for improving relationships, albeit mostly in highly local settings and without as an extensive theoretical background. In this paper we revisit this issue from the perspective of large scale service organisations that seek to enjoy better relationships with their customers at a sustained and large scale. We propose that improved relationships be based on designing for ‘customer relationship experiences’ (CRX), in which both the customer and the organisation benefit, through mutual contributions that go beyond direct commercial exchange. To this purpose, the present paper provides a CRX framework and tools (with industry evaluation) that bring together the theory of marketing and practice of design literatures for assisting larger service organisations to design for relationships.

KEYWORDS: CX, CRX, customer, experience, organisation, relationships, service design, contribution, engagement, role enhancement

Introduction

In 2013 the service design consultancy Livework Studio ran a project with the German company Vorwerk. This high-end producer of domestic appliances wanted to introduce a digital service component around its product called ‘Thermomix.’ It had asked Livework to help in creating a new product service system by connecting the product to the internet. Together, they designed a service that allows users to generate recipes, share them and easily

load them into their Thermomixes. The new service of Vorwerk had a great impact on their customers: (a) they started to share their own recipes online through an online community facilitated by Vorwerk, (b) created their own media channels through which they actively marketed the product to other potential buyers, (c) and in some occasions even directly bought the product for friends or relatives. In other words, Vorwerk's customers started to engage with the company by fulfilling all kinds of additional roles for them. The new service instigated an active and mutual relationship between Vorwerk and its customers, as well as among customers themselves.

This new activist engagement of Vorwerk's customers, both towards the company as towards other (potential) customers, was instantly recognized —by both Vorwerk and Livework designers— as an important outcome of the project. Local successes of customers sharing recipes or buying the Thermomix as a gift for others were scrutinized to see which qualities of the new service caused customers to trust and care more for Vorwerk's products and services. Yet, what was less understood by Livework's and Vorwerk's designers is how these improved relationships were the result from their efforts to provide good service. The designers in this project had only targeted an improved customer experience with the new product service system. For them, the improved relationships had been a by-product of the digital service created. But could improved customer relations be the object of design in itself? In other words, can service designers redirect their aim from improved customer experiences (CX) to improved customer relation experiences (CRX)?

In design there have been studies and reports of design projects that should improve relations between service providers and users. For the most part this literature on 'relational services' consists of studies and reports of local projects carried out by designers, with the direct aim of improving the relational experiences of providers and users in a service setting. For instance, Cipolla (2012) described a project where students and elderly in Milan would share houses, thus resolving financial, security and loneliness issues of both groups. Despite generating valuable insights, these studies have not focussed on improving relationships between large scale service organisations and their customers until now. Nevertheless, they might provide a starting point to do exactly that.

In the field of design engineering there has been a more indirect advocacy for models that allow for less predetermined and more humane relations between users and providers of services. For example, Borchers & Thomas pursued to improve the trustworthiness of (web-based) services and others to improve the adaptability of people working together in health care services, or in product-service systems (Griffioen et al, 2017; Hassannezhad et al., 2017). So, within design there are best practices, like the Vorwerk case, available. However, there is no theoretical framework developed yet that provides an understanding about managing customer relationships and how to design for them. Consequently, service design scholars increasingly acknowledge the need to design for relationships more deliberately (e.g. Baek et al., 2017; Griffioen et al, 2017; Snelders et al., 2014). In this way, they answer to earlier calls by Cipolla and Secomandi (2010) that service designers require interpretative frameworks for dealing with interpersonal qualities in services and by Hassannezhad et al. (2017) and Den Hollander et al. (2015) that designers of product-service systems need to take a more relational perspective to their work.

Existing scientific research that focuses on the topic of customer-organisation relationships comes from fields such as economics, marketing, and service research and is well-developed. At the same time, this body of work has mostly focused on understanding and managing relationships, and on studying potential barriers and enablers in the formation of good relationships (Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995). It is in the translation of theory to execution, i.e. in eliciting good customer relations, where these fields went wrong. Departing often from downright opportunistic intentions, many customer relations programs have seen customers becoming distrustful of such programs, shying away from becoming more engaged with the products and services of companies. As Palmer (2010) concluded: "many academics and practitioners have argued that customer relationship management has not created the

expected levels of value for customers and profitability for organisations” (p. 196). Even though the field progressed – and relationship management slowly expanded into the territory of customer experience management – tools aimed at supporting practitioners in devising the right stimuli to support an excellent customer experience and relationship are still scarce (Pullman & Gross, 2004; Gentile et al., 2007; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

Going back to the Vorwerk case described earlier, we can see how the issues raised in customer relationship management and design literature both may hold relevance for the relational service elements that Livework’s and Vorwerk’s designers inadvertently helped create. The literature on customer-organisation relationships supports us to explain what Vorwerk did right, and how other organisations might profit from better relations with their customers through integrating relational elements into their current or new services. However, the literature does not explain what creative, experience centered tools and methods are required for achieving improved CRX. The design literature on the other hand, provides best practices and shows the tools and methods they used. However, this literature lacks a solid theoretical base to start from.

This paper integrates and builds on insights from both fields and focuses on a context that is close to the Vorwerk case (B2C) where we have witnessed the potential of service design for improved (activated) customer relation experiences. The research question that we address is:

In a B2C service context, how can customer experiences be understood and modelled in a way that supports design practices for better relationships, both between customers and organisations and among customers themselves?

The paper is structured as follows. It starts by describing a short history of research on customer-organisation relationships management and research on design qualities that foster these relationships. Afterwards, it summarizes the academic fields around customer-organisation relationships into a CRX framework. This framework is translated to three design exercises which have been evaluated in industry. The paper closes in a discussion, conclusions and the limitations of the work.

Service as (exchange) relations

Customer-organisation relationships

The academic field that started studying the fostering of relationships between organizations and customers was relationship marketing (see e.g., Berry, 1995; Fournier et al., 1998; Gwinner et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Relationship marketing scholars investigated how companies could establish long-term, committed, trusting and co-operative relationships with customers. The proposed relationships were characterized by openness, genuine concern for the delivery of high-quality goods and services, responsiveness to customer suggestions, fair dealing, and, most crucially, the willingness to sacrifice short-term advantage for long-term gain (Bennet, 1996).

Companies quickly incorporated relationship marketing’s constructs into their strategies with the aim to ‘get closer’ and insert themselves further into their customers’ lives. However, in their efforts, Bennet’s (1996) desired sacrifice of short-term advantage for long term gain got lost in translation; companies developed a plethora of frequent-buyer-reward programs, invitations to join mailing lists and so on. So, the application of relationship marketing in most programs for ‘customer relationship management’ (CRM) resulted in one-sided affairs that tried to push consumers into buying more, rather than establishing the quality of relationship that customers would prefer (Fournier et al., 1998). This ‘selling-out’ of CRM programs was further aggravated by the advent of automated scanning and tracking technologies of people’s purchases (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Verhoef, 2003). These

technologies for monitoring people's buying behaviour allowed CRM programs to personalise a company's marketing efforts. Again, organisations were quick to leverage these technologies to generate cross- and upselling, but few used them to make more meaningful recommendations to their customers.

Social and other new media renewed the academic interest in customer relationships, since information about people's buying behaviour became an even more accessible and tradable asset than it had been before. This interest has led to the establishment of *customer engagement theories* (see, for example, Brodie et al., 2011; Sashi, 2012; Vivek et al., 2012). These new engagement theories looked at how customers had found new means for talking to companies and to each other in blogs, review systems, discussion groups, etc. (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). This shifted the 'one-sidedness' of original mass media broadcasting to much more interactivity between companies and their customers. This interactivity enables customers to become more engaged and active partners, and the Vorwerk example from the introduction can be seen as a point in case.

Service design

The designers who proposed the new product-service system for Vorwerk were part of a service design project. Within this project they appear to have done something that made customers engage in new relationships with others, going beyond mere purchase and individual use. We believe that this is not a coincidence and think that service design could prove to be a solid foundation to design for relationships. This is because service designers are already aware of the need to design for improved service encounters to improve the customer experience (Zomerdiik & Voss, 2010; Reason, Løvlie & Flu, 2015). Also, they are used to co-creative approaches and engaged co-production by users. Moreover, they are used to the entangled position of all stakeholders in processes of resource integration (see e.g. Gallouj & Weinstein, 1997; Kelley et al., 1990; Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Zeithaml et al., 1985).

To understand service design's qualities that instigate and foster relationships we focus on how relationships influence customers' experiences. We follow the definition of Jaakkola et al. (2015, p.186) who define the customer's service experience as a "subjective response to or interpretation of the elements of the service". Several elements make up and influence the customer experience, amongst which are relational elements (Gentile et al., 2007). As shown in the Vorwerk example, relationships can follow from new services implicitly and inadvertently—without the relational elements having been explicitly designed. A more thorough understanding of these relational elements could possibly make this unconscious competence a conscious one.

To summarize, the application of theories developed by relationship marketing and CRM has not led to practices that created and fostered sustained relationships between organisations and their customers, or among customers themselves. In addition, social and new media led to new understandings about how to develop two-way customer relationships through engagement. Moreover, recent insights derived from service design show that designing for relationships as a part of the customer experience seem a fruitful path to explore further. By integrating the theory of relationship marketing, CRM and customer engagement with the practice of service design, we could uncover the means to successfully design for relationships.

The CRX framework

The analysis of relationship marketing, customer engagement and service design literature led to a CRX framework, empowering practitioners to design the relational components in customer experiences (Figure 1, for a detailed description of the development of the framework see Koenders, 2017). The framework consists of one outcome to be measured (goodwill), and two actionable elements (engagement behaviour and relationships). The three elements of the CRX framework reinforce each other. Strong engagement behaviour leads to a further build-up of relationships (Vivek et al., 2012), which in turn leads to more goodwill, and vice versa. Goodwill thus becomes a measure of both people's willingness to further expand their relationship and engagement behaviours.

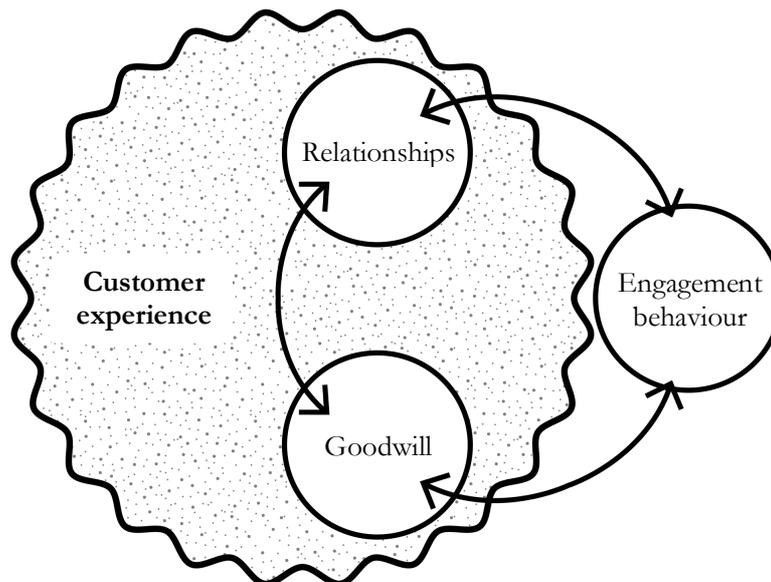


Figure 1 – The CRX Framework

Below we explain each building block of the CRX framework in more detail.

Relationships

Relationships might sometimes be perceived as having a stable nature. However, they are only the result of continuous activity or behaviours between partners (Duck, 1995). Consequently, we recognise relations as open ended and always changing. This is also affirmed by Dwyer et al. (1987) – some of the first to discuss relationships in a buyer-seller context – who say that relational exchanges always have "traces to previous agreements [and are] longer in duration, reflecting an ongoing process" (p. 13). Consequently, the CRX framework considers relationships to be based on a continuous process of the strengthening and weakening of ties, with varying degrees of quality influenced by the behaviour and perception of the partners (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997; Duck, 1995; Shemwell et al., 1994).

These relationship qualities—which represent the extent of trust and commitment in the relationship between a customer and an organisation (Bove & Johnson, 2001; Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997)—are the manageable aspect of relationships in this framework: By performing on the level of relationship quality deemed appropriate by partners, their relationship quality steadily improves. This paper follows the five actionable relationship qualities as proposed by Bennet (1996) and Hermans (2015), with each higher-level quality only attainable after lower-level qualities have been satisfied (see figure 2):

(1) Familiarity—Understanding of, and familiarity with each other (Gremler & Brown, 1998), (2) Identification—A cognitive state of self-categorization (Fournier & Yao, 1997), (3) Reciprocity—A degree of involvement with a service that is mutually understood between partners (Bennet, 1996), (4) Communality—Friendship-likeness of a service (Fournier & Yao, 1997) (5) Continuity—A degree of formality arising from the ongoingness of a relationship (Fournier & Yao, 1997).

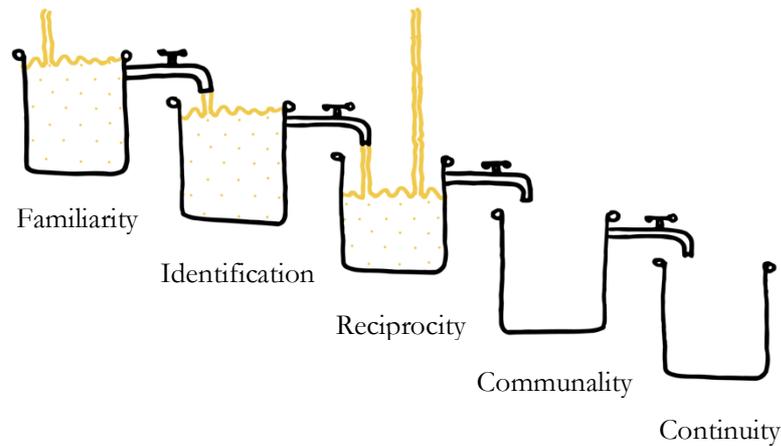


Figure 2 – The flow of relationship qualities

Within a service setting, the interactions between partners in a relationship (in the role of user, provider, or any other role) are termed encounters. To manage the relationship quality in these encounters, an organisation first has to identify which encounters could possibly arise. Cipolla (2012), in her study on students and elderly in Milan, identified three relationship prerequisites. These prerequisites can be used to identify the encounters in a service: Acceptance (based on direct benefits of a relation), Attribution (based on an emotional connection), and Confirmation (based on the equitability of the relational outcomes among partners). Once the encounters have been identified, the relationship quality within them can be set at the level that both partners deem appropriate. It is important to note that new encounters can always be added (or it can be that anticipated encounters will no longer take place).

Engagement behaviour

Customer engagement theory describes customer engagement as the customer relationship beyond purchase (Vivek et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2011). Therefore, all behaviour of relationship partners that affect one another other than purchasing behaviour is engagement behaviour. This can be non-opportunistic behaviour, such as recognition of each other, but also behaviour that leads to additional roles for partners, such as co-design or co-production behaviours (Gouthier & Schmid, 2003; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). When such additional roles are fulfilled to partners' satisfaction this leads to a build-up of the relationship.

We have identified two manageable sides of customer engagement: customers' motives to engage and organisation's desired customer roles. Both should be identified and designed for to successfully manage engagement behaviour in a reciprocal relationship.

On the one hand, the customer needs a motivation to engage. Five actionable engagement motives from a customer's perspective have been identified based on the work of Neghina et al., (2017): (M¹) Development (of the customer's resources in terms of knowledge, skills, materials, etc.), (M²) Ethical (appreciating non-opportunistic behaviours of partners), (M³) Empowerment (of the customer over his or her experience), (M⁴) Individualizing (to the

customer's desired outcome, abilities and context) and (M⁵) Relating (reinforcing social ties throughout the experience).

On the other hand, organisations should facilitate their customers to perform additional roles if they want to enable positive customer engagement. Six customer roles for positive engagement behaviours have been identified based on the work of Gouthier & Schmid (2003), and Jaakkola & Alexander (2014): (R¹) Co-producer (participation to enable service delivery), (R²) Co-interactor (contributing resources to improve the offer being used), (R³) Co-designer (contributing resources to improve the organisation's offers beyond what is being used), (R⁴) Co-marketer (performing marketing activities), (R⁵) Buyer (fulfilling a sales role for the organisation) and (R⁶) Motivator (fulfilment of a leadership role to motivate and support service employees and other customers).

Goodwill

Goodwill revolves around assessing (and measuring) partners' intentions to engage relationally with each other. Ajzen (1991) states that intentions are shaped by motivational factors that influence behaviour. In this context, we assume that engagement behaviour and good relationship quality are the motivational factors for people to slowly develop goodwill towards partners. In this sense goodwill can be seen as the measurable proxy for the other two actionable elements of the framework. The measurement instrument has been developed by a research team at Pennsylvania State University. More information can be found through SiR Intel (2018).

Creation of the CRX framework and tooling

The CRX framework and toolset were jointly developed and evaluated through collaboration with multiple organisations. These collaborations consisted of workshops and semi-structured interviews with industry experts from six B2C companies [KLM, Adidas, Natuurmonumenten (a Dutch foundation comparable to the British National Trust), Sonos, TomTom, and Eneco]. The organisations were chosen based on being (a) B2C, large scale service organisations and (b) availability. Collaborations were mostly made possibly by the time and effort of Livework employees. This could have had a negative effect on the quality of the tooling, as the evaluation simultaneously served a function of maintenance to Livework's commercial relationships. On the positive side: Livework's long standing relationships with the participating organisations created a very open setting to talk about their—sometimes troubled—relationships with their customers.

Between workshops and interviews the tooling matured, with most changes made in three main iterations. The workshops improved both the tooling and the framework behind it, whereas the interviews focussed more on just the framework. Throughout development, the explanation, presentation and canvasses to explain the exercises evolved as well.

Workshops took about three hours and were shaped in a way to accommodate the participating organisations best. Amongst other factors, the workshops were adapted to the organisation's offer, the participants' seniority, their role within the organisation, their maturity with regards to CX, the size of the group etc. For example, Sonos and TomTom are mostly product organisations with supporting services, whereas Eneco is further towards being a pure service provider. This was reflected in the chosen customer journeys to improve. Also, the TomTom team needed less general introduction to service design tools such as customer journeys and personas as all participants worked in TomTom's UX department. At Sonos and Eneco however, multidisciplinary teams participated, requiring the establishment of a common understanding of the service design tools first.

To familiarize the participants of the study with the CRX framework, we presented example situations from other service contexts throughout the explanation (ranging from promising cases such as Vorwerk, to more extreme examples of engagement behaviour such as the Flemish Jack Association, a group of highly pro-active Jack Daniel's customers, see appendix A). Afterwards, we asked them whether the framework was clear to them, how it could be improved, and what value they saw in it. During the interviews, the framework was discussed within the context of the participant's organization. During the workshops, the framework was applied to their context through the tooling.

After each workshop, the researcher evaluated the tooling through co-reflection with the participants (Tomico et al., 2009). These sessions lasted between 20-60 min. The co-reflections were recorded, and notes were taken throughout the sessions. Table 1 gives an overview of (1) all participating organisations, (2) the roles of participants, (3) the process of the workshop, and (4) the insights the sessions provided for the toolbox, categorised per session.

Table 1: CRX Tooling development process

#	PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION	PARTICIPANTS	PROCESS	INSIGHTS FOR TOOLBOX
1a	Sonos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3x Sr. Manager Customer Care - 4x (Digital) Care Manager - CX Quality Manager - Community Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Explanation of CRX framework - Establish customer journey - Exercise 1: Relationship prerequisites - Explanation of relationship qualities - Exercise 2: Relationship fostering and reciprocity - Final remarks and closing 	<p>In this workshop, relationship qualities were mapped directly onto a customer journey canvas. This proved to be too hard because not all interactions with the service are / should be relational encounters. This showed the need for a tool to identify which interactions should be turned into encounters.</p> <p>Additionally, this workshop focussed only on customer motives to engage, not on the roles they could fulfil (such as co-production or co-design). This made it hard to explain the value to design for relationships from an organisational perspective and created the need for a reciprocity canvas.</p>
1b	Adidas	Director digital experience NPS	Semi structured interview and open discussion of CRX framework and tooling	Adidas showed an understanding and interest in positioning relationships as the next level of CX. Possible ways of implementing it in Adidas' digital experience were explored and possible values were discussed. This confirmed the need to clearly show the value for the organisation of additional customer roles.
1c	KLM	Product strategy manager	Semi structured interview and open discussion of CRX framework and tooling	KLM also showed an understanding and interest in positioning relationships as the next level of CX. The inflight experience of KLM was elaborated upon as an opportunity to improve relations between and among cabin crew and travellers. The second iteration of tooling was explained and discussed with the interviewee to assess and improve its understandability for management.
2a	TomTom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2x Senior UX researcher - UX researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Explanation of CRX framework - Introduction of TomTom customer journeys - Introduce exercises - Exercise 1, 2 and 3 with intermittent explanation - Summary feedback and closing 	<p>A second iteration of tools was tested at TomTom. This was the first workshop with the prerequisites and reciprocity exercises. It worked well to separate the identification of encounters through the prerequisites exercise and only then use the relationship qualities to design the encounters through the fostering exercise.</p> <p>An add-on canvas on the fostering exercise allowed for unlimited exploration of relationship qualities in repeat journeys. However, this exercise did not prove useful because for the most part it allowed for limitless exploration without generating many new insights. This laid bare the need for finding the necessary scope of relationship qualities.</p>
2b	Natuurmonumenten	Marketing intelligence	Semi structured interview and open discussion of CRX framework and tooling	Natuurmonumenten showed an understanding and interest in positioning relationships as the next level of CX. However, the participant found it hard to find a place of application within their own organisation. This showed that there is a need to identify where in a target organisation the framework and tools would be applicable.
3	Eneco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5x Marketing - 4x CX manager - CX Expert lead - Innovation designer - Team lead marketing operations and process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Explanation of CRX framework - Introduction of Eneco customer journeys - Introduce exercises - Exercise 1, 2 and 3 with intermittent explanation - Summary feedback and closing 	This workshop was very similar to the previous workshop with TomTom, except that a canvas was added to scope relationship qualities for the fostering exercise. This was found to be much more useful than exploring the scope of required relationship qualities through the fostering exercise alone. It also helped in identifying where in the organisation the framework and tools would be most applicable.

Final Toolset: Three exercises to design for relationships

The final iteration of the toolset consists of three design exercises as follows.

- (1) *Exercise 1: Relationship prerequisites.* The aim of this exercise is to identify encounters in the customer journey (see figure 3). To do this, we added an extra layer to the customer journey map. This extra layer explores whether touchpoints fulfil a relationship prerequisite (and therefore are an encounter). Participants identify the prerequisites in the touchpoints, identified in the customer journey, with the help of Cipolla's (2012) classification of 'Acceptance', 'Attribution' and 'Confirmation'.

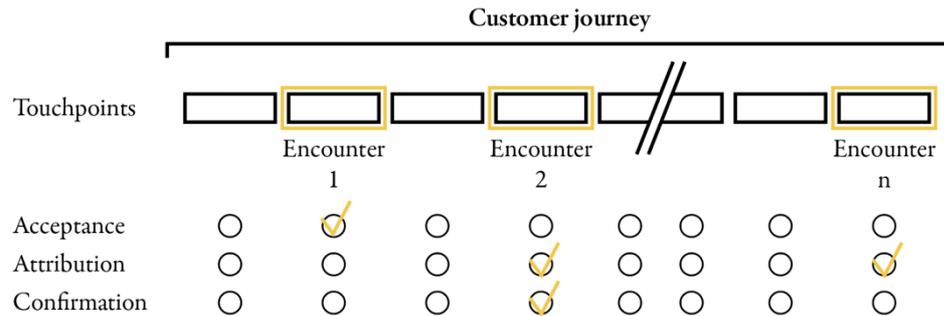


Figure 3 – Identification of encounters in the customer journey, through Cipolla's relationship prerequisites

- (2) *Exercise 2: Relationship fostering.* This exercise provides the means to manage and improve relationship qualities within and across encounters, by establishing the level of relationship quality deemed appropriate by partners. Bennet's (1996) actionable relationship qualities of the framework (see figure 2) are used to do this. Participants explore suitable relationship qualities by taking the encounters and by mapping their desired levels of relationship quality for different personas (see figure 4). Every relationship quality knows several service aspects that relate to it, providing strategies to attain them throughout the service.

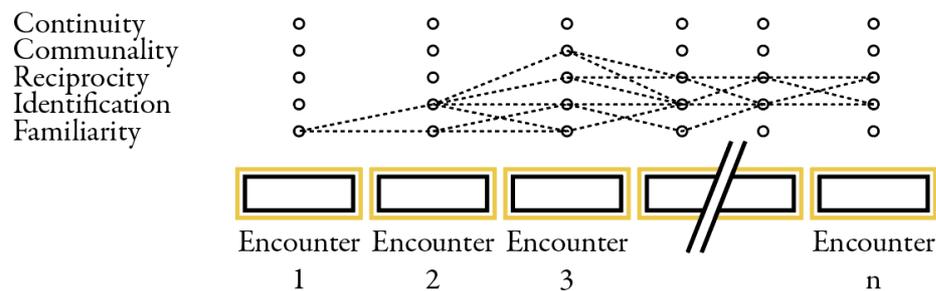


Figure 4 – Exploring relationship qualities within encounters through relationship fostering

- (3) *Exercise 3: Relationship reciprocity.* This exercise establishes the reciprocal relationship engagement behaviours of partners. It does so by exploring the motives to engage from the customers' side and ideating on equal engagement behaviour of the customer (through customer roles) that could be stimulated by the organisation's side (see figure 5). See engagement behaviour in the framework for a description of the motives and roles.

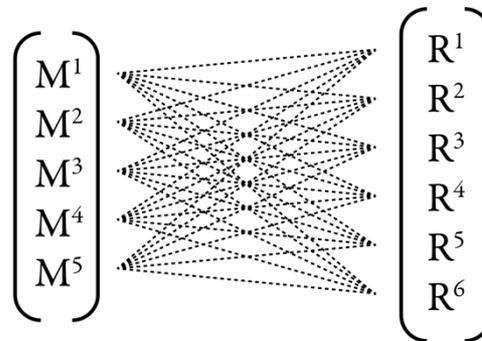


Figure 5 – Exploring a non-transactional give take balance through *relationship reciprocity*

Participants can explore relationship reciprocity (exercise 3) either before or after the relationship fostering exercise (exercise 2). This depends on whether an organisation wants to improve a current service (exercise order 1, 2, 3) or are developing completely new services (exercise order 1, 3, 2). In both cases, the participants have to integrate the results of this exercise with the results of the relationship fostering exercise. In combining these two exercises, it is important to remind practitioners of the exercise that relationships are always open-ended affairs: the preferred level of a relationship and its reciprocity can never be dictated by one partner alone (i.e. the company).

Industry evaluation of CRX framework and tooling

Practitioners of the six companies were highly interested in the CRX framework and its intentions. All participants saw useful properties in (parts of) the CRX framework. Some even expressed their impression of the framework in a management superlative: *"This truly is the next level, it simply makes so much sense to try to improve the relationships we have with our customers"* (TomTom Senior CX manager).

In addition, the visualisations that were used during the presentation helped in making the concepts more understandable. For example, the visualisation of how relationship qualities are built up (figure 2) was well received, as one Sonos employee remarked after the workshop: *"The slide with the bucket graphic was one of the more memorable ones"* (Sonos CX quality manager).

The participants perceived the flow of the workshop as natural, and many remarked that the workshop schedule felt logical and that there had been a good combination of knowledge transfer, knowledge application, and translation to their contexts. However, in terms of time spent on the exercises in the workshop, it appeared that three hours were very short. Nevertheless, even within this relatively short time frame, the participants and researchers were able to recognize opportunity areas for improvement of the relationship and engagement behaviours between organisation and customers, as well as among customers themselves.

The examples provided were of high value to showcase potential customer roles. Without extreme examples (e.g. the Jack Daniel's case, see appendix A), it was hard for participants to come up with ideas beyond their current situation (e.g. a better unboxing experience at both Sonos and TomTom), and with them they were able to come up with new ideas (e.g. an application that changed based on usage for users of the TomTom app, and extended roles of 'super-users' at Sonos' community).

Finally, participants mentioned that the CRX toolbox made them more conscious of relationships and provided them with valuable insights in how they can design for better them, both between their customers and their organisation and among their customers themselves. This was because the tools supported them in establishing a shared terminology and understanding of how relationships work and what elements are important. The workshop supported in creating a deeper understanding of the CRX framework and its potential for their organisation. For example, they gained the insight and started imagining how encounters could change over time, to steadily increase relationship quality, and how this affected several parts of their organisation. As one Sonos employee remarked: *"This touches so many parts of our organisation; the community, [customer] care, marketing, it really ties it all together!"*

Discussion and conclusions

The Vorwerk case at the start of this paper is an example of the value that a reciprocal relationship between and among customers and an organisation could provide to all of them. The presented CRX framework and tooling provide companies with guidelines on how to design customer relationship experiences (CRX).

The CRX framework used customer experiences (CX) as a basis for supporting the growth of relationships. Yet, the CRX framework shifts the focus in design literature from mostly inter-customer relationships to the relationships between organisations and their customers. This means the work addresses the concern of several academics (Pullman & Gross, 2004; Gentile et al., 2007; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014) that practitioners until now did not have the means to design the right stimuli to create excellent customer experiences and therefore customer relationships. Specifically, it gives the means to focus the designer's efforts on specific parts of the customer experience, through which relationships can be built most effectively and efficiently.

The framework does so by taking Cipolla et al.'s (2012) 'relationship prerequisites' to identify which interactions contribute most to the relationship. Afterwards, it integrates the 'relationship quality' perspective from relationship marketing, and customer engagement theory's perspectives on customer's 'motivations' and 'roles'. By explaining and making explicit which type of service elements contribute to relationship qualities, service designers should be better able to design service interactions in which the quality of the relationship is adapted to what the customer deems right. This further strengthens the relationship as customers appreciate the organisation interacting with them at the relationship quality they prefer. All in all, the framework and tooling give practitioners the means to design for relationships more systematic than before.

Aside from benefitting the customer, CRX also benefits the organisation. The reciprocal nature of relationships means customers will contribute more of their resources to the organisation when they are at the right level of relationships quality. As such, they can fulfil additional roles for the organisation like for example design, marketing, sales or even customer and employee support roles.

To our knowledge, this paper is one of the first to translate the original intentions of relationship marketing—aiming for mutual, open, fair and non-opportunistic relationships—to actionable and creative practice in design. This is a step up from the problematic practice in relationship marketing as described by Palmer (2010). It also is a first step in answering the increasingly acknowledged need of design academics (Baek et al., 2017; Griffioen et al., 2017; Snelders et al., 2014) to design for relationships. Indeed, rather than feeding off from one-sided transactions with customers, the Vorwerk case, and the CRX framework and tooling make explicit how service designers might support the engaged behaviours of proactive users to the benefit of all.

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Appendix A: Flemish Jack Association



The Flemish Jack association, a group of Jack Daniel's (JD) enthusiasts that for the sake of their own pleasure and recognition amongst themselves create all kinds of JD memorabilia.



One member creates JD inspired paintings and bowlingpins based on the bottle logo.



Another member – who is a steelworker – uses his professional skills to refurbish old children toy-cars into JD branded children's toys.



Yet another, who is a chocolatier, uses his professional skills to create JD flavoured chocolates in the shape of a barrel.



Their latest group effort was a limited-edition packaging for a special JD bottle, in the theme of the 100 year great war in Belgium. They did packaging design, marketing, sales, investment to manufacture the boxes and distribution, all based on goodwill for JD.

Suggestions and comments after first version:

The paper was changed in several ways to incorporate the feedback of the reviewers and improve the previous version. A summary of the most predominant changes is outlined here:

- The structure (and some text) was changed to make for a better and more logical piece to read.
- Table 1 was added to clarify the process of all workshops and the insights they delivered for development.
- Figure 3, 4 and 5 were added to clarify the tooling.
- Appendix A was added to show an extreme example of possible customer engagement.
- The relationship between the framework and tooling was made more clear by explaining the theory in the framework and merely its translation into tooling at 'Final Toolset: Three exercises to design for relationships'.