

# Understanding Customer Experience in the Digital Context: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract

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Digital transformation has significantly changed the way customers interact with companies, creating a new paradigm in customer experience management. This study aims to systematically review the literature on customer experience in the digital era using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The articles analyzed were obtained from international databases Google Scholar. The results of the study show that digital customer experience is influenced by a number of main factors, namely the personalization of data-based services, the use of artificial intelligence, the integration of online and offline channels (omnichannel), and the use of immersive technologies such as AR and VR. Digitalization also expands the customer journey, making it more complex and dynamic, and boosting satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image. Despite this, the existing literature is still limited to technical and functional aspects, with little attention to the emotional, social, and contextual dimensions of small and medium-sized businesses. Future research is suggested to explore the integration of technology with the emotional and cultural aspects of customers, as well as its impact on long-term relationships. These findings provide practical implications for companies to develop more holistic, sustainable, and customer-centric digital strategies.

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## **1. Introduction**

The advancement of digital technology has transformed the global business landscape, influencing not only how organizations operate but also redefining the ways they interact with customers. In earlier times, businesses primarily emphasized product quality and service efficiency; however, in the digital era, the focus has shifted toward creating valuable customer experiences at every point of interaction. The availability of e-commerce platforms, social media, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence allows customers to remain connected to companies in real time. In this environment, customer experience becomes a central determinant of competitive advantage in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace (Pashiera & Sardjono, 2024).

At the same time, consumer behavior has changed significantly. Modern customers no longer seek only high-quality products but also demand services that are fast, practical, personalized, and engaging. They are more critical, quick to evaluate, and easily switch to alternatives when expectations are unmet. Purchasing decisions are now heavily shaped by electronic word of mouth, user reviews, and online interactions (Roy et al., 2024). Customer experience thus extends far beyond transactions to include perceptions, emotions, and overall impressions shaped during their journey with a brand. The importance of customer experience is emphasized by its role as a differentiating factor in markets where products and services are increasingly homogeneous. Previous research shows a strong link between positive experiences and outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, repurchase intention, and brand image (Aldriyanti & Tjajaningsih, 2022). Companies

capable of providing consistently positive experiences tend to secure long-term loyalty, gain repeat business, and benefit from customer recommendations. Conversely, failing to deliver can undermine trust, even when the products themselves are of high quality. Nonetheless, building customer experience in the digital age is complex. It involves not only designing intuitive interfaces but also ensuring service speed, personalization, and emotional engagement while addressing concerns about privacy and data ethics. Maintaining consistency across omnichannel interactions whether online or offline remains a major challenge. If not carefully managed, data use can lead to privacy issues that diminish consumer trust.

To meet these challenges, firms increasingly adopt advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, chatbots, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) to provide immersive and personalized experiences. Emerging practices even extend into the metaverse, offering innovative ways to engage customers. Yet, technology alone cannot guarantee positive outcomes unless combined with a deep understanding of customer expectations and behaviors. Several studies highlight that user value is a critical factor in shaping digital experiences, particularly in websites (Hellianto & Suzianti, 2019). However, in digital and social media contexts, customer experiences are often paradoxical. While users enjoy accessibility and personalization, they also face risks of information overload and social pressure (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020). Social media has evolved into a multi-functional channel that not only supports advertising and brand awareness but also facilitates two-way engagement and post-purchase interactions (Fanta & Ayman, 2021). Despite these insights, research specifically addressing how user

value, paradoxical experiences, and the multifunctional role of social media interact in contexts such as tourism remains limited. Although customer experience has been widely studied, much of the existing literature remains fragmented, often focusing on narrow contexts such as e-commerce or social media without offering a holistic overview.

As a result, there is still no comprehensive synthesis that clearly defines, measures, and manages customer experience in digital settings. This gap provides the rationale for further research. Accordingly, this study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to consolidate existing findings and provide a complete picture of customer experience in the digital era. From an academic perspective, it contributes by synthesizing patterns, identifying themes, and mapping future research directions. From a practical perspective, it offers guidance for managers to design strategies that deliver more meaningful digital experiences. Thus, the study is relevant to both theoretical development and business practices in navigating the challenges of digital competition.

## **2. Methods**

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with the aim of compiling a comprehensive picture of customer experience in the digital era based on previous research. SLR was chosen because it is able to provide a more systematic and structured literature synthesis than a narrative literature review, so that it can identify patterns, trends, and research gaps more clearly. The data collection process is carried out through searching scientific articles on a number of

leading databases from Scholar. The selection of the database was based on the wide scope of the literature, its credibility, and its relevance to management, marketing, and digital business topics. Article search uses a combination of keywords such as customer experience, digital customer experience, customer journey, online consumer behavior, and digital transformation.

In order for the literature obtained to be relevant to the focus of the research, inclusion and exclusion criteria are set. The articles included are publications in reputable scientific journals. In addition, the article should highlight the customer experience that occurs in the digital context, whether in the e-commerce, financial services, hospitality industry, and other digital platforms. Articles that do not meet these criteria, such as non-scientific publications, proceedings without *peer review*, or research that only addresses customer experience in traditional contexts, are excluded from the analysis. The next stage is the filtering of articles by title, abstract, and full content. Articles that passed the selection were then further analyzed by extracting important information, such as research objectives, methods used, main results, and contributions to the literature.

All information collected was analyzed thematically by grouping the findings into certain categories, such as the definition of digital customer experience, influencing factors, impact on company performance, and innovation trends in customer experience management. Through this approach, the research is expected to produce a clear mapping of the development of customer experience studies in the digital era, as well as identify research areas that are still open to further exploration.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. Definition and Conceptualization of Digital Customer Experience**

The concept of customer experience was originally understood as the overall subjective impression formed when a customer interacts with a product, service, or brand. In traditional contexts, these experiences are often associated with face-to-face interactions, the quality of direct service, or the physical atmosphere in the store or branch. However, the development of digital technology has brought about a major change in the way interactions occur. Customers are now in contact with the company through various online channels, ranging from websites, mobile applications, to social media (Jayaram et al., 2015). This makes the customer experience no longer limited to physical interactions, but rather encompasses a more complex and multidimensional digital journey sequence.

In the literature, digital customer experience is defined as a customer's overall perception of interactions that take place through digital platforms, which includes emotional, cognitive, sensory, and behavioral aspects. Some studies emphasize that the digital customer experience is formed not only from a single point of interaction, but from the accumulation of experiences across various interconnected digital channels (Bolton et al., 2018). The fundamental difference with the traditional customer experience is the digital nature that allows interactions to be real-time, personalized, and take place in a dynamic online ecosystem. Therefore, the digital

customer experience is seen as a broader and more complex construct compared to the conventional customer experience.

### **3.2. Factors Affecting Digital Customer Experience**

The literature shows that the digital customer experience is influenced by a combination of interrelated technical, emotional, and social factors (Kacprzak & Hensel, 2023). From a technical perspective, interface design and usability are the most fundamental elements. The intuitive interface, clear navigation, and speed of access to digital services contribute directly to customer convenience. Conversely, complex designs or slow digital services tend to fuel frustration and degrade the quality of the experience. Therefore, user experience design (UX) and user interface design (UI) are seen as crucial factors in building a positive customer experience.

In addition to technical factors, data-driven personalization also plays an important role in influencing customer perception. Companies that are able to utilize big data, recommendation algorithms, and artificial intelligence technology to customize content and offerings are considered more successful in creating relevant and valuable experiences (Elahi et al., 2021). Digital service factors also determine, such as the speed of response to online customer service, the availability of accurate information, and the consistency of interaction across various digital channels (omnichannel). Data security and privacy are emerging as a major concern, as customers are increasingly critical of how their personal data is collected, stored, and used by companies. This level of trust ultimately affects customer loyalty and sustainability.

Beyond the technical and functional aspects, the literature also emphasizes the importance of social factors in shaping the digital customer experience. Interactions in online communities, customer reviews, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) have been shown to influence purchasing decisions and brand perception (Jeong & Koo, 2015). Customers often trust the experiences of others shared on digital platforms more than information provided directly by the company. This emphasizes that digital customer experience is not only the result of interaction between customers and companies, but is also influenced by the broader digital social ecosystem. Thus, the digital customer experience is the result of an integration between technology, services, and social interactions that shape customer perceptions holistically.

### **3.3. Customer Journey in the Digital Era**

Customer journey in the digital context is understood as a series of customer interactions with companies that take place across various online channels, from the pre-purchase stage to the post-purchase stage. The literature emphasizes that this journey is no longer linear, but rather dynamic and multidimensional. In the pre-purchase stage, customers rely heavily on information from online reviews, social media, and user-generated content. Recommendations from influencers or digital communities also play a big role in influencing the initial perception of a brand (Ozuem et al., 2021). This shows that the early stages of the customer journey in the digital age are heavily influenced by external factors that are difficult for companies to control directly.

At the purchase stage, the main focus lies on the digital transaction experience. The ease of the payment process, the flexibility of method choices, and the security of transactions are the main determinants of the quality of the customer experience (Islam, 2024). Companies that are able to deliver fast, secure, and practical transactions tend to have higher levels of satisfaction. In addition, omnichannel integrations that connect online and offline experiences, are also an important highlight. For example, customers can search for information online and then complete a purchase in a physical store, or vice versa. Consistency of experience across these channels is key to the company's success in meeting modern customer expectations.

The post-purchase stage in the digital customer journey emphasizes the importance of continuous engagement between customers and companies. Digital-based after-sales services, such as shipment tracking systems, chatbots for complaints, and app-based loyalty programs, are important factors in maintaining long-term relationships. Moreover, customers often share their post-purchase experiences through online reviews or social media, which then influences other potential customers (Liu et al., 2020). Thus, post-purchase not only serves as the final stage in the customer journey, but also as the starting point for the formation of a new cycle that affects market perception at large.

### **3.4. The Impact of Digital Customer Experience on Companies**

Digital customer experience contributes directly to a company's success (Khan et al., 2024). One of the most prominent impacts is the increase in customer satisfaction. When digital interactions take place easily, quickly, securely, and

relevantly, customers will feel satisfied with the services received. This level of satisfaction is important because it is the basis for the creation of loyalty, which in turn strengthens the long-term relationship between the customer and the company. Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, take advantage of additional services, and be more open to ongoing interactions.

In addition to influencing satisfaction, digital customer experience has also been shown to have an impact on loyalty and repurchase intent (Amoako et al., 2023). The literature states that customers who have a positive experience on digital platforms are more likely to continue using the company's products or services, even when there are many alternative options on the market. This built loyalty is not only behavioral, such as repeat purchases, but also affective loyalty in the form of emotional attachment to the brand. The next impact is the formation of brand equity, where a consistent digital customer experience strengthens a positive image and brand reputation in the eyes of consumers and the public at large.

Furthermore, digital customer experience plays a strategic role in creating long-term business value. Companies that manage to build superior digital interactions tend to have stronger competitiveness, as customers not only buy products, but also feel the added value of the experience created. Conversely, negative experiences can lower customer trust and worsen a company's reputation, especially in the digital age where customer reviews and complaints quickly spread through social media. Therefore, digital customer experience management is not only an operational issue, but also a corporate strategy that determines the sustainability and growth of the company (Rhendica & Budianto, 2024)

Recent literature shows that trends in digital customer experience are greatly influenced by technological advances (Bolton et al., 2018). One major innovation is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to improve personalization. This technology allows companies to analyze customer data in depth so that they can provide more relevant product recommendations, customized offers, and automated customer service through increasingly intelligent chatbots. The presence of AI not only speeds up interactions, but also creates experiences that are more adaptive to customer needs.

In addition to AI, the adoption of immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) is a growing trend in improving digital experiences (Al Balushi et al., 2024). AR and VR are widely used in the retail and tourism sectors to provide simulation of products or services before purchase. With this technology, customers can experience a more interactive experience, for example trying products virtually or exploring tourist destinations through digital tours. In addition, the trend of omnichannel experiences that integrate various online and offline channels is also being strengthened, indicating that the modern customer experience must be consistent across all touchpoints.

Another trend is the increasing attention to digital ethics and data security Jurkiewics (2018). Customers are increasingly critical of how companies manage their personal data, so transparency and accountability are an added value in building trust. Thus, innovation in digital customer experience does not only focus on technology, but also on building a safer, more transparent, and value-oriented ecosystem.

## **4. Conclusion**

A systematic review of customer experience in the digital era shows that digitalization has fundamentally reshaped how customers interact with companies. The findings reveal that the digital customer experience encompasses service personalization, integration of online and offline channels, and the application of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, chatbots, and immersive tools like AR and VR. The customer journey has become increasingly complex and dynamic, influenced by social media, online reviews, and digital community interactions. These changes directly enhance satisfaction, loyalty, and brand image, strengthening competitiveness and long-term business sustainability.

Nevertheless, several limitations were identified. Much existing research emphasizes technological and functional aspects, while emotional and social dimensions of digital experiences remain underexplored. In addition, many studies focus on large corporations or multinational firms, leaving a gap in understanding how small and medium-sized enterprises manage digital customer experiences. Few studies have also examined the long-term impact of these experiences on sustainability in greater depth. Given these limitations, future research should broaden its scope by integrating technological, behavioral, and cultural perspectives. Particular attention is needed to explore emotional connections, community engagement, and the symbolic meaning of digital interactions, thereby creating a more holistic understanding of customer experience. Longitudinal research is also

important to reveal how digital experiences influence loyalty and long-term relationships over time. From a practical standpoint, companies are encouraged to manage digital customer experience as a strategic priority rather than merely a technical matter. Transparency in data use, ongoing innovation, and consistent cross-channel management are essential. Combining technological, emotional, and social approaches will enable firms to deliver meaningful and sustainable experiences that foster trust and competitiveness.

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