

**Publisher**<http://jssidoi.org/esc/home>**USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN IN THE CONTEXT OF EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING****Gintarė Gulevičiūtė¹, Margarita Išoraitė²***Vilniaus kolegija / Higher education Institution, Saltoniškių Street 58, Vilnius, Lithuania**E-mails: ^{1*}m.isoraitė@vvf.viko.lt (Corresponding author); ²g.guleviciute@vvf.viko.lt**Received 11 November 2024; accepted March 31 2025; published 30 June 2025*

Abstract. User experience is important to every successful company. In experiential marketing, the goal is to create a positive user experience, encouraging them to become loyal, share experiences, and become a brand ambassador. The article aims to investigate the peculiarities of user experience design in the context of experiential marketing. Qualitative research based on nine user experience professionals' interviews was conducted, and qualitative content analysis was performed. The research indicates a strong trend toward a more integrated, technology-enhanced, and user-focused approach to user experience design and its relationship with experiential marketing. Collaboration between user experience design and marketing will intensify, leveraging user experience data for more targeted, emotionally resonant marketing experiences. The research addresses the future of user experience design, emphasising AI, VR, and biometric integration, reflecting the latest trends in the field.

Keywords: user experience, experiential marketing, user experience indicators, user experience management process models

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1. Introduction

Growing competition reduces the value of price-based offers. It encourages online store suppliers to look for more effective and long-term ways of achieving competitive advantage in the digital space. In the digital space, companies compete not only on the local but also on the global market; business success depends on factors that influence user experience, knowledge, and understanding. Therefore, to gain a competitive advantage, it becomes essential to understand the user's experience and satisfaction with the services they provide (Ozfidan, & Ismail, 2023; Intal et al., 2023; Hsiao & Tang, 2024; Msosa et al., 2024; Jiang & Verhulsdonck, 2025; Fisher, 2025).

Although more and more attention has recently been paid to the concept of experience marketing, where special emphasis is placed on the creation of user experience, which has an impact on creating strong company-consumer relationships, there is a lack of research on the effects of user experience in the context of experiential marketing. This is a new, relatively little-analysed field of marketing theorists and practitioners.

2. User experience and experiential marketing concept

User experience is an important topic; many possible definitions and peculiarities exist. Musulin and Strahonja (2023) argued that user experience is considered a holistic and phenomenological outcome of the user's interaction with an IT artefact, transcending the narrower concept of pragmatic use and emerging as an individual response to pursue higher motivational goals such as meanings and emotions. Hussain et al. (2022) stated that the meaning of user experience characteristics follows product features, user status, and contexts, while others have found associations between usability and heterogeneous factors such as gender differences, context usage, and usage patterns. Luther et al. (2020) mentioned that the concept of user experience is characterised by ambiguous and diverse expressions (e.g. "use" or "user consent"), which hinders precise definition. One reason is that usability is considered a sub-concept of user experience. Berni and Borgianni (2021) defined user experience as a consequence of brand image, presentation, functionality, system performance, interactive behaviour and assistive capabilities of the system, product or service. Marques et al. (2021) mentioned that user experience is a quality aspect that considers the emotions a system evokes, and the concept should be extended beyond efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction.

Fayez et al. (2023) analysed the perception of user experience, which revolves around a person's impressions of an experience or the emotional aspect of the experience that marks the interaction between people and computers. Berni and Borgianni (2021) also determine the internal and physical state of the user, resulting from previous experiences, attitudes, skills, abilities, and personality, as well as from the context of use. Norman (2004) stated that emotion and cognition work together as consumers relate to products, and emotions are inseparable from and a necessary part of cognition, so emotionally appealing aesthetic elements are essential in "user-centred" design.

Corrales-Paredes et al. (2023) mentioned that user experience is a key concept in the design of physical and digital products such as devices, software, websites, and mobile apps. Krueger et al. (2020) defined that consumers' experience of products and services can be divided according to two different dimensions: hedonic and pragmatic properties: hedonic indicates the affective components of a product or service, such as enhancing a person's psychological state of well-being and pragmatic features include the functionality and usability of the product or service.

According to Marques et al. (2021), practitioners and researchers realise the importance of user experience evaluation, so plenty of research has been conducted in this area. Ntoa et al. (2021) stated that measuring user experience becomes a much more complex endeavour when the goal of the interaction is not only a technological system or program but also the entire intellectual environment and the systems in it.

Feng and Wei (2019) mentioned that previous user experience research has focused on short-term measurements emphasising experiential features related to improving the first impression of a product, such as ease of use and utility. In recent years, more and more researchers have begun to emphasise the importance of long-term user experience evaluation. Lee et al. (2022) examined the usability of digital native actors in detail. They suggested what engaging content, user experience, and interface aspects should be created from their point of view - elements that need to be added to the user experience have been obtained from the information architecture and usage environment categories.

Koonsanit et al. (2022) studies had measured user experience in order to improve end-user satisfaction, and the findings defined the fact that instantaneous user experience can affect episodic user experience; during real user experience, various factors will interact in a complex way, and accumulated experiences will determine the final user satisfaction. Veigas et al. (2023), in their user experience research, moved to an encouraging basis method, scrutinising specific methods used in various situations, delving into the basic principles of behaviour, and evaluating the significant influence of these methods on user behaviour.

According to Schmitt (1999), experiential marketing is not focused solely on the product or service and its features but also includes the experiences – both emotional and rational – that companies create for their customers. Yuan and Wu (2008) mentioned that experiential marketing is the user's perception of a product or

service provider's company or brand, evaluation after experience activities, and received incentives. A positive experience increases the value of a product, brand, and/or company. Schmitt (1999) argues that the focus is not only on customer experience but also on its management, requiring marketing strategies and decisions to be updated based on five key elements: sensation, emotion, action, thinking, and interaction. Essential aspects of experiential marketing include consumer experience, consumption as a holistic process, customer rationality and emotionality, and the variety of applied marketing methods. According to Yuan and Wu (2008), there is no emphasis on the product or service quality. Still, on the contrary, the emphasis is on stimulating the user's emotions and senses, which are related to good service or product quality. Experiences can be created and developed. Companies should choose the theme of the experience, enhance the impression with positive elements (symbols), eliminate negative symbols, form an image of memorable items/services, and involve all the user's senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing). All experience elements must stimulate the user's five senses, including what they see, hear, taste, smell, and touch.

3. User experience indicators and management process

Companies use user experience indicators to understand whether a user is satisfied with a service or product. Usually, these indicators are obtained by surveying service users about key aspects of their experience with the company. When surveys are received from users, they can be processed using different methods, as user experience can be measured in several different ways. These metrics help business professionals understand how to improve user experience and encourage customer loyalty. Below are some key user experience metrics.

Ease of use: this indicator covers how easy it is for the user to use the interface of the product or service. This can include a clear navigation menu, intuitive design and quick response to user actions. Basukiam et al. (2022) mentioned that perceived usefulness is the degree to which a user believes using a particular smart speaker system can improve their productivity and work performance. Rauniar et al. (2014) defined perceived usefulness as the degree to which social media users believe using a particular website helps meet goal-seekers' needs.

Emotional reactions: user experience also refers to the emotional reactions when using a product or service. It can be related to joy, frustration, satisfaction or other emotional states. Marshall and Brown (2006) argued that this factor depends on what emotions one is considering. Expectations will influence some emotions. Almost by default, people are surprised when they experience an unexpected result. It is probably because of frustration, as this emotion also arises from inconsistent predictions and realisation.

Product effectiveness: this metric measures how well the product meets the user's needs and goals. This includes the product's functionality and ability to deliver what the user expects. Son et al. (2021) stated that organising and presenting product reviews on e-commerce sites can increase user experience and provide customers with more informative product feedback on time. Product reviews are more persuasive for users than a list of objective product features.

Satisfaction: user experience often leads to satisfaction. This indicator measures whether the user is satisfied with the product or service. Positive satisfaction often leads to loyalty. Wang et al. (2023) conducted research in the context of green food and stated that user experience satisfaction has a positive effect on green food repurchase intention. Also, user experience satisfaction can improve consumers' repurchase intention for organic food through consumer perception of social value, green self-efficacy and warm glow; the greater the degree of inertia of the user, the more substantial influence of green self-efficacy and warm glow on consumers' green food repurchase intention; and the higher the degree of consumers' subjective norms, the stronger the influence the consumer perceives social value, green self-efficacy, and the warm glow of the consumer's raw food repurchase intention.

Need satisfaction: user experience is also about whether a product or service meets the user's needs and expectations. Effective user experience management can help achieve this goal. Cuevas-Campos et al. (2020) research on need satisfaction showed that simply self-motivation played a mediating role in the need-intention relationship, and satisfaction of basic needs leads to higher levels of intention through increased self-motivation.

Frequency of use: this indicator shows how often users use the features provided by the product or service. Hu et al. (2022) studied teacher groups and defined that they achieved higher levels of self-efficacy and adaptive teaching when ICT was more commonly used in reading classrooms. Experienced teachers better facilitated adaptive teaching and self-efficacy using ICT.

When analysing user experience management process models, there are structural frameworks that help understand and manage the user experience from start to finish. These models help business professionals understand consumer behaviour and how to influence it to create a good user experience.

Merino-Cajaraville et al. (2023) and Abbasi et al. (2012) analysed the User Experience Lifecycle Model, emphasising that the user experience constantly evolves. It includes four stages: the use process, the evaluation process, the testing process, and the evaluation process. Bicevskis et al. (2016) mentioned that the Event-Driven Model breaks down the user experience into specific events that occur during the consumption of a product or service; the example of this model can be many data processing systems we use in our daily lives - state information systems (population register, vehicle register, etc.), as well commercial solutions (e-shops, CRM, etc.). Matzavela and Alepis (2021) stated that The User Experience Tree Model represents the user experience as a tree with branches corresponding to different aspects such as functionality, efficiency, usability and emotional reactions. Zhou et al. (2011) present the User Experience Ecosystem Model, which focuses on how users interact with the different elements of products and services that make up a larger ecosystem. It helps you understand how these elements interact with each other and affect the user experience.

The research aims to investigate the peculiarities of user experience design in the context of experiential marketing.

Objectives of the research:

- to present the theoretical background of user experience and experiential marketing concept;
- to analyse user experience indicators and management processes;
- based on qualitative research, to evaluate the characteristics of user experience design and to discover the link between the user experience design and experiential marketing;
- create recommendations based on the results of in-depth interviews with the experts in user experience design.

4. Research methodology

Research method. Exploratory qualitative research was carried out with the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of user experience peculiarities in the context of experiential marketing by conducting nine expert interviews. The qualitative method was selected to interview the user experience professionals to collect expert opinions, which would help prepare a summary of experiential marketing recommendations. Qualitative content analysis was performed, which enables interpretation of text data, and qualitative categories were distinguished, including analysis and verification of research data (Cohen et al., 2007).

Research instrument. Interviews were conducted by presenting open-ended questions to the experts without standard possible answers and evaluation scales. A semi-structured interview was chosen as the data collection method. The preferred method should help to answer the research questions as best as possible (Elo et al., 2014). Saturation is when more information does not reproduce when new data is integrated. Questions covered the following topics:

- The most important elements of user experience design;
- Relationship between user experience design and experiential marketing;
- Future of user experience design.

Research sample. Determining what sample size should be held in qualitative research is challenging. The sample size depends on the details of the research, the research strategy, the informativeness of collected data, and the method of data collection. We selected nine experts based on methodological prerequisites reviewed in the classical test theory (Libby & Blashfield, 1978). Based on the theory, the number of decision-making experts and the reliability of aggregate decisions are linked by the variable value ratio (non-linear relationship). At the same time, the highest precision of estimates is reached in a group of 7-9 experts. The research sampling strategy was chosen because researchers could select informants based on established criteria who could ensure data quality and answer research questions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The main criteria for selecting informants were competencies in the analysed field. The main information of informants can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Interview participants

Code	Position	Tasks / Responsibilities
E1	UX researcher	Analyse theoretical aspects of user experience
E2	UX Architect	Team lead in content development/social media
E3	UX Designer	Design for users throughout a project
E4	Head of Marketing	Work with experiential marketing
E5	UI Designer	Design all the screens that make up a digital user interface
E6	UX Manager	Are in charge of the UX team
E7	UX researcher	Analyse theoretical aspects of user experience
E8	UX Manager	Are in charge of the UX team
E9	Head of Marketing	Lead marketing teams, work with experiential marketing

Organisation of the research. LinkedIn was used to find and communicate with experts (by a personal message inviting participation). The informants were allowed to choose a date and time that suited them and the type of contact they wanted to have with the researcher. Telephone calls, remote meetings and written questions were sent to the participants (they were able to select the most appropriate form). Data collection took place between September and November 2024.

Data analysis. While applying qualitative content analysis during this research, the data was systematised and summarised to reveal the meanings the informants gave. After preparation of the analysis, categories or concepts were acquired. The researchers decided on the choice of concept and categories.

Research ethics. To ensure research ethics and participant consent, participants were required to sign a compliance agreement before they participated in the interviews. This agreement outlined the purpose of the study, assured confidentiality and obtained informed consent from the participants. By adhering to ethical guidelines, the researchers ensured the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process.

5. Qualitative Research Results

Interviews were focused on understanding the most important elements of user experience design, the relationship between user experience design and experiential marketing and the future of user experience design. When analysing answers about the most important elements of user experience design, the target audience and functional elements are of special importance (see Table 2).

Table 2. Category – the most important elements of user experience design

Subcategory	Empirical study statements (indicators)
Target audience	“(…) The most important elements of UX design involve extensive user research, empathy, and usability testing, as these elements validate that the product truly serves its intended users“ [E1]“(…) the top priority is to ensure all elements, from usability and accessibility to visual appeal, come together to create a cohesive user experience. (...)balancing these aspects with business goals, prioritising based on user needs and organisational objectives are very important” [E6]; “Usability and customers empathy, as these ensure that the experience resonates with real user behaviours and preferences“ [E7]; “(...) the focus is on usability and emotional engagement of target audience, as these elements create lasting brand impressions. UX elements that encourage positive emotional connections are valuable to brand’s perception and loyalty“ [E9].
Functional elements	“UX design’s backbone is information architecture and navigation flow, ensuring users can effortlessly find what they need“ [E2]; “Core elements like usability, interaction design, and visual appeal are tools for crafting experiences that satisfy user needs and elevate brand engagement.” [E3, E4]; “Visual consistency, aesthetics, and interaction design are essential in creating an intuitive and visually appealing interface“ [E5]; “focus is on orchestrating elements like usability, accessibility, and aesthetics to ensure cohesive and efficient design workflows“ [E8]

After analysing the results of the relationship between user experience design and experiential marketing, user focus and marketing focus could be defined as the main subcategories (see Table 3).

Table 3. Category – relationship between user experience design and experiential marketing

Subcategory	Empirical study statements (indicators)
User focus	<i>“(…) UX connects to experiential marketing by identifying users’ expectations and emotional triggers. UX research provides insights that can guide marketing campaigns, ensuring they resonate with the target audience by creating memorable experiences that align with the product’s actual usability” [E1]; “(…) experiential marketing aligns the product’s design with campaign goals, ensuring that users find the same values in the experience that they see in promotional materials” [E3]; “UX design and experiential marketing intersect in their focus on customer satisfaction” [E4, E6]. “The customer research data forms experiential marketing strategies, ensuring they’re grounded in real user insights” [E7].</i>
Marketing focus	<i>“Experiential marketing creates a seamless bridge between user expectations set by marketing campaigns and the product’s structure. Designing consistent, easy-to-navigate frameworks supports the promises made by experiential marketing, leading to cohesive and satisfying user experiences” [E2]; “experiential marketing visually reinforces brand messages. The consistency created in UI design (from colours and fonts to layout) ensures that users feel the brand’s presence throughout their interaction, bridging the gap between marketing and actual use” [E5, E8]; “UX is the extension of brand promises made in experiential marketing campaigns. Ensuring that UX elements align with the marketing vision allows to deliver on promises, building trust and enhancing brand perception” [E9].</i>

The results of user experience design showed that artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and functionality will shape this area (see Table 4).

Table 4. Category – future of user experience design

Subcategory	Empirical study statements (indicators)
AI/VR focus	<i>“(…) the future of UX design will emphasise even more user-centric insights, likely enhanced by AI and biometrics to gauge user emotions and refine products in real-time” [E1]; “(…)UX design will include AR/VR, voice interfaces, and possibly even emotional design. Design will have more adaptive and inclusive interfaces, where accessibility and personalisation shape each user’s unique experience” [E3]; “(…) future will likely include designing for diverse devices and interfaces, like AR/VR and voice-controlled environments” [E5]; “(…) future holds increasing responsibility for managing interdisciplinary teams that include AI and data science experts to create adaptive, data-informed experiences” [E6]; “Emerging technologies like biometrics and AI will enrich your research, creating data-informed insights that further enhance personalisation”[E7]; “The future of UX involves managing more specialised roles within UX, including AI-driven design, emotion-based UX, and interdisciplinary collaboration with marketing and data science” [E8].</i>
Functionality	<i>“The future will involve a shift toward designing adaptable architectures that respond dynamically to user behaviours: increased reliance on machine learning to adjust pathways and refine information architecture on-the-fly based on real-time data” [E2]; “(…) future will be about deeper integration between UX and marketing, using real-time data to make product and brand experiences more personalised” [E4]; “UX data will help to drive more personalised and emotionally resonant marketing experiences” [E9].</i>

Tracking the user experience is critical for businesses seeking to grow. Today, no successful company is complete without monitoring the user experience. User experience is about digging deep and understanding what customers need, what they value, what they are capable of, and where they need help. Therefore, user experience involves interactions with a product, service or system. It is the customer's personal experience that customers have when using the product. It includes various factors during which the customer encounters ease of use, accessibility, design, functionality, and the user's reaction to the product during and after use.

Conclusions

Experiential marketing is used when examining consumer needs. This type of marketing differs from standard marketing in that its principles are related to the customer's experience, which makes this method specific and focused on the customer's needs to achieve satisfaction and further cooperation. Creating engaging and unique

experiences is one of the best ways to connect with customers to ensure they want to learn more about the brand and the features it offers.

Qualitative research results showed that functional aspects like usability, accessibility, and visual appeal are consistently emphasised as the main elements of user experience design. Key experts' statements suggest that elements such as user empathy, usability testing, and cohesive design ensure that the product is both functional and engaging for the user. Balancing these with business goals is vital to a successful user experience design. User experience design in relation to experiential marketing is noted for its alignment with understanding users' emotional triggers and expectations, providing insights that guide marketing strategies. User experience and experiential marketing intersect by aligning product usability with marketing promises, ensuring users experience consistency across brand interactions. Combining marketing messages and user experience design enhances user trust, bridging brand promises with actual product experience. Emerging technologies like AI, virtual reality, and biometrics are expected to play a crucial role. These technologies enable real-time adaptation to user emotions, creating personalised and adaptive experiences. Experts' statements emphasise that the future of user experience design will likely incorporate AR/VR, voice interfaces, and emotion-based designs. Adaptability and data-driven decision-making will shape future user experience practices, with machine learning enabling dynamic adjustments in response to user interactions.

Novelty and research limitations

The study's novelty is based on an analysis of the relationship between user experience design and experiential marketing, two fields typically studied separately. By examining how user experience principles can inform and enhance experiential marketing strategies, the study offers insights that may benefit both design and marketing professionals, helping to bridge gaps between product usability and brand perception.

Limitations of the study - the study relies on interviews, and the findings may lack broad empirical validation. Interview-based insights reflect subjective perspectives, which, while valuable, may not be universally applicable without further quantitative research. The applicability of findings may be restricted to specific industries or digital environments that can leverage AI, VR, and experiential marketing. Fields focusing less on digital interaction may find limited relevance in this study's findings.

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