



# Effective customer journey design: consumers' conception, measurement, and consequences

Christina Kuehnl<sup>1</sup> · Danijel Jozic<sup>2</sup> · Christian Homburg<sup>3,4</sup>

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## Abstract

Recently, practitioners have begun appraising an effective customer journey design (CJD) as an important source of customer value in increasingly complex and digitalized consumer markets. Research, however, has neither investigated what constitutes the effectiveness of CJD from a consumer perspective nor empirically tested how it affects important variables of consumer behavior. The authors define an effective CJD as the extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as designed in a thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way. Analyzing consumer data from studies in two countries (4814 consumers in total), they provide evidence of the positive influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty through brand attitude—over and above the effects of brand experience. Importantly, an effective CJD more strongly influences utilitarian brand attitudes, while brand experience more strongly affects hedonic brand attitudes. These underlying mechanisms are also prevalent when testing for the contingency factors services versus goods, perceived switching costs, and brand involvement.

**Keywords** Effective customer journey design · Touchpoints · Customer journey · Brand experience · Scale development

Apple, Amazon.com, BMW, IKEA, and Nespresso are prominent examples of brands that are dedicated to an effective customer journey design (CJD) by carefully applying design principles to all touchpoints they offer consumers during their customer journeys (Maechler et al. 2016). Amazon, for example,

has recently added a new touchpoint to its customers' purchase journeys by ordering 20,000 vans. Cohesive to Amazon's value proposition of offering a convenient online shopping experience, the firm is working to build its own delivery fleet in the United States to gain more control over how its packages are delivered to customers. Consistent with other Amazon touchpoints, the vans are stamped with Amazon's smile logo, allowing for easy recognition. Importantly, taking into account consumers' specific needs and contexts, this new touchpoint allows shoppers to better track their packages or to see a photo of where a package was left if they were not at home (Pisani 2018).

As the Amazon example illustrates, the proliferation of touchpoints in today's digitally enriched markets makes managing the customer experience increasingly complex (Lemon and Verhoef 2016) and, if not adequately managed, could "contribute negatively to the brand relationship" (Duncan and Moriarty 2006, p. 238). Therefore, many practitioners have worked to manage and design touchpoints throughout customer journeys as best possible. For example, firms such as Accenture, IBM, and McKinsey invest heavily in capabilities that combine design thinking, marketing, and data analytics to plan entire customer journeys (*The Economist* 2015). Echoing this trend, researchers have pinpointed customer journeys as a new source of customer value in the twenty-first century

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✉ Christina Kuehnl  
christina.kuehnl@reutlingen-university.de

Danijel Jozic  
jozic@mailbox.org

Christian Homburg  
homburg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de

<sup>1</sup> ESB Business School, Reutlingen University,  
72762 Reutlingen, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Mainz, Germany

<sup>3</sup> University of Mannheim, 68131 Mannheim, Germany

<sup>4</sup> University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

(Lemon and Verhoef 2016), emphasizing that “the value of a more *designerly* approach beyond products and services ... implies using the customer journey” (Gruber et al. 2015, p. 1; emphasis added).

Given the relevance of customer experiences, which form through the perception of multiple touchpoints along customer journeys, research has begun investigating distinct aspects of customer journeys (see Table 1). However, despite the high practical relevance of the customer journey, academics and practitioners lack a widely accepted definition and adequate measure of how consumers perceive an effective CJD, and there is no systematic investigation of its consequences on consumer behavior applicable across a broad range of consumer industries. This study aims to contribute to filling these research voids.

In more detail, research is limited in at least three respects (see Table 1). First, while extant literature on customer experience (management) (for a literature review, see Lemon and Verhoef 2016), customer journey management (focusing on the composition and order of single touchpoints; e.g., Anderl et al. 2016), and experiential service design (focusing on service blueprinting; e.g., Patrício et al. 2011) addresses the importance of touchpoints, it remains largely unclear how

consumers perceive the design of touchpoints throughout their customer journeys. Important to note is that an effective CJD, at its core, is a market-oriented management concept (Homburg et al. 2017), and assessing the effectiveness of such concepts from the customer perspective is more illuminating than assessing managers’ perceptions of their own efforts (Blocker et al. 2011). Therefore, to close this knowledge gap, we adopt a consumer perspective, define an effective CJD, explicate the key components of the construct, and create a scale to measure it from a consumer perspective. Specifically, we conceptualize an effective CJD as the extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as designed in a thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way. From our conceptualization, we develop a parsimonious and, thus, easy-to-administer scale.

The second shortcoming, largely due to the first inadequacy, is the lack of a systematic investigation of the nomological network of an effective CJD. This neglect goes hand in hand with the research mandate Lemon and Verhoef (2016) address to develop and test frameworks that include several experience-related concepts and moderators (see Table 1). We aim to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding

**Table 1** Overview of existing research fields and contribution of this study

Research field	Customer experience (management)	Customer journey management	(Experiential) service design
Key studies	Brakus et al. 2009; Grewal et al. 2009; Homburg et al. 2017; Lemke et al. 2011; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Verhoef et al. 2009	Anderl et al. 2016; Baxendale et al. 2015; Li and Kannan 2014; Srinivasan et al. 2016	Patrício et al. 2008, 2011; Payne et al. 2008; Richardson 2010; Teixeira et al. 2012; Zomerdijk and Voss 2010
Focus of studies	Understanding and defining CX (management) in various settings  <b>Research gap:</b> No investigation of how consumers perceive the design of customer journeys (Batra and Keller 2016; Lemon and Verhoef 2016). <b>Contribution 1:</b> Conceptualizing and operationalizing customers’ perceptions of effective CJD.	Path-to-purchase / attribution models; contribution of touchpoints to CX	Service experience blueprints; customer journey maps / modeling
Other experiential constructs considered	No	No	No
Moderators considered	No  <b>Research gap:</b> “Identifying the critical linkages [of key components of conceptual models of customer experience and customer journey] and moderators is a critical task for future research” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 85). <b>Contribution 2:</b> Developing and testing a conceptual model of effective CJD, including brand experience and moderators, highlighting a dual mechanism of an effective CJD and brand experience to customer loyalty being valid across moderators.	No	No
Cross-industry context	Yes	Yes	No
Empirical approach	Mainly conceptual / exploratory  <b>Research gap:</b> Limited cross-industry and “empirical work directly related to customer experience and the customer journey” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 70). <b>Contribution 3:</b> Quantitative, cross-industry investigation and validation of conceptual model through two studies (Study 1: 2300 U.S. consumers; Study 2: 2312 European consumers).	Quantitative	Mostly qualitative

The literature review is not intended to be exhaustive but rather includes recent and/or influential articles in each research field. CX = customer experience

of the customer experience by assessing how an effective CJD influences important outcomes of consumer behavior. We do so by treating an effective CJD and brand experience (Brakus et al. 2009) as two crucial and distinct value drivers of a customer experience.

Specifically, from a theoretical point of view, effective CJD and brand experience—defined as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli [touchpoints]” (Brakus et al. 2009, p. 54)—are distinct in that they focus on distinct aspects of a customer experience as Table 2 highlights. Specifically, adopting Yang et al.’s (2012) construal-level approach and taking into account a hierarchical organization of construals (Trope et al. 2007), we propose that effective CJD is more concretely construed, addressing the procedural or “how” aspect in terms of a specific course (i.e., the customer journey) through which the end goal—the customer experience—is gratified. By contrast, brand experience is more abstractly construed, addressing the “why” aspect or the outcomes and gratifications of end goals. In this regard, an effective CJD is based on the perception of multiple touchpoints along a customer journey, whereas consumers may build their brand experience on the assessment of a one or multiple touchpoints. Besides these key differences, we acknowledge that a potential overlap between the consistency dimension of effective CJD and the intellectual dimension of brand experience may exist. Furthermore, effective CJD and brand experience share their common reference to brand-owned touchpoints, i.e., touchpoints, which are designed and managed by firms and thus are under their control like packaging or advertisement. By contrast, a customer experience includes both brand-owned and brand-earned touchpoints (i.e., touchpoints beyond firms’ control like

Instagram pictures posted by customers; Baxendale et al. 2015) and additionally entails social responses. Table 2 summarizes key differences among effective CJD, brand experience, and customer experience.

Against this background, we empirically show that effective CJD and brand experience directly and indirectly influence customer loyalty through brand attitudes. Consistent with construal-level theory, we reveal two distinct mechanisms through which an effective CJD and brand experience affect customer loyalty. While both constructs influence customer loyalty through utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes, an effective CJD primarily fosters utilitarian brand attitude, while brand experience primarily influences hedonic brand attitude. We also find support for the prevalence of these underlying mechanisms when testing our contingency factors services versus goods, perceived switching costs, and brand involvement.

Third, extant work in related research fields is either limited to single sectors (e.g., experiential service design) or rather qualitative and exploratory in nature (e.g., customer experience; see Table 1); thus, there is a need to add quantitative empirical work to this research area (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Drawing on qualitative and quantitative consumer data from two countries and evaluating 42 brands that cover a diversity of consumer industries, we derive and test an operationalization of an effective CJD and demonstrate the concept’s applicability to important consumer outcomes, such as brand attitude and customer loyalty, across a wide range of consumer industries.

In summary, our study makes important contributions to the customer experience, customer journey, and brand management literature. Adopting consumers’ perceptions of a market-oriented management concept to conceptualize, measure, and evaluate firms’ efforts in effective CJD is a sound

**Table 2** Summary of key differences between effective CJD, brand experience, and customer experience

	Effective CJD	Brand experience	Customer experience
Definition	The extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as designed in a thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way	“Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli [such as colors, shapes, typefaces, background design elements, slogans, mascots, and brand characters] that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communication, and environments [stores, events]” (Brakus et al. 2009, p. 53)	“Customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 71)
Focus	Process (i.e., customer journey, or specific course through which the end goal is gratified)	Outcomes or gratifications of end goals	End goal
Goal direction	Feasibility or “how” aspects	Desirability or “why” aspects	Feasibility (“how”) and desirability (“why”) aspects
Number of touchpoints	Multiple touchpoints necessary	One or multiple touchpoints	Multiple touchpoints necessary
Scope	Restricted to brand-owned touchpoints	Restricted to brand-owned touchpoints	Includes both brand-owned and brand-earned touchpoints

basis for consumer-based strategies (Hamilton 2016). As such, our work is also highly useful for practitioners, in that an effective CJD might represent a significant approach to manage the complexity of customer journeys. From a branding perspective, such CJD principles may provide guidance for managers on how to convey the brand concept effectively across multiple touchpoints in today's digitalized world. Specifically, our study helps to foster a common understanding of what an effective CJD is and provides clear strategic design directions. Practitioners can easily use our scale to evaluate, monitor, and benchmark CJD investments. Essentially, the article reveals that both an effective CJD and brand experience are important for attaining customer loyalty, though they vary in their impact across distinct settings as evidenced by our moderators. As such, our study makes important recommendations on how to align both concepts, with an effective CJD likely being less cost-intensive and easier to administer than brand experience.

## Conceptualizing effective customer journey design

We followed the approach of prior scale development studies (e.g., Brakus et al. 2009; Homburg et al. 2015; Panagopoulos et al. 2017) and conducted a literature review and engaged in in-depth interviews for conceptualization. These steps helped us gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of CJD and its conceptualization by identifying three dimensions underlying consumers' perception of CJD.

### Literature review

As a first step, we initially drew on the work of Homburg et al. (2017), who present a grounded theory of customer experience management referring to strategic directions for designing customer journeys. Using the analysis of prior literature and managers' interpretations, the authors identify several dimensions for designing customer journeys. We transferred these dimensions to the customer perspective and then extended the review to related literature. Overall, this literature review revealed three recurring aspects of consumers' perceptions of CJD that we summarize in three dimensions: (1) thematic cohesion of touchpoints, related to literature on the experience economy, brand extensions, or lifestyle-based storytelling (e.g., Park et al. 1991; Pine and Gilmore 1998; Schmitt 2003); (2) consistency of touchpoints, related to literature on integrated marketing communications, corporate identity, and corporate design (e.g., Batra and Keller 2016; Duncan and Moriarty 2006; Simoes et al. 2005); and (3) context sensitivity of touchpoints, related to service/retail convenience, multichannel marketing, and

multi-channel integration (e.g., Emrich and Verhoef 2015; Montoya-Weiss et al. 2003; Oh et al. 2012; Seiders et al. 2007).

### Consumer interviews

As a second step, we investigated consumers' conception of CJD and asked 34 graduate-level students and young professionals (47% female, mean age = 24.6 years) to describe their perception of an outstanding (weak) CJD with a brand of their choice. We generically explained the notions of touchpoints and customer journey to ensure a clear understanding of strong and weak CJDs. Then, the participants needed to come up with their own conception of what makes CJD outstanding. They provided descriptions for 44 brands across a wide range of consumer industries, which indicates an applicability of CJD across industries. Apple, Nike, Coca-Cola, and Amazon.com represented the top four brands in the context of strong CJD, while different telecommunication and financial service providers were the most frequently cited brands with weak CJD. Two research assistants, unfamiliar with the research topic, independently applied text coding to identify and analyze participants' descriptions and then allocated them to CJD dimensions. We provided a short briefing on the coding procedures to the research assistants and asked them to abstract the interviews to codes through line-by-line analysis. Next, in line with Brakus et al. (2009), we provided raters with descriptions of CJD dimensions and asked them to select codes and the respective descriptions that correspond with our conceptualization of the CJD dimensions. Both research assistants showed high intercoder agreement and easily resolved any discrepancy. Overall, we found support that an effective CJD manifests itself through three dimensions. Web Appendix A lists positive and negative descriptions for each CJD dimension.

### Effective CJD and its dimensions

From the insights gleaned, we define an effective CJD as the extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as designed in a thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way. This definition highlights that an effective CJD can be thought of as a second-order construct reflected in the three first-order dimensions thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity of touchpoints. Importantly, the conceptualization as a multi-dimensional construct implies that all three dimensions are necessary for the successful implementation of an effective CJD. In other words, we propose that a greater effectiveness of CJD will manifest itself in higher degrees of each CJD dimension.

**Thematic cohesion of touchpoints** Thematic cohesion of touchpoints refers to the extent to which consumers perceive multiple touchpoints as sharing a common brand theme (e.g., Apple: simplicity; Amazon: online shopping) or “experience motif” that facilitates the identification of a brand as a relevant choice for realizing a given lifestyle, goal, or desire. The brand >theme is anchored in all touchpoints, embedding the fundamental value proposition and emitting the same meaning of a brand across all brand-owned touchpoints (Keller and Lehmann 2006). In other words, high thematic cohesion of touchpoints supports customers in more easily processing multiple touchpoints into a semantic knowledge scheme that connects the brand with their specific lifestyle, activity, or desire. Importantly, to maintain effectiveness, new touchpoints (e.g., Amazon’s delivery fleet) added to a customer journey should show high thematic cohesion to existing touchpoints.

**Consistency of touchpoints** Consistency of touchpoints refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a uniform design of the brand across multiple touchpoints along their customer journeys in terms of design language, communication messages, interaction behavior, process, and navigation logic (Duncan and Moriarty 2006; Keller and Lehmann 2006). This CJD dimension facilitates the process of moving through a customer journey to achieve a specific lifestyle, goal, or desire. It does so by facilitating learning through easy recognition, evaluation, and retrieval of information at multiple brand-owned touchpoints and thus helps consumers quickly recognize a brand (Batra and Keller 2016; Puccinelli et al. 2009). For example, with its smile logo on vans, Amazon is maintaining consistency among its touchpoints along the customer journey, which before was disrupted by UPS or FedEx delivery services displaying their own logos and corporate customer interaction behavior.

**Context sensitivity of touchpoints** Context sensitivity of touchpoints refers to the extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as responsive and adaptive to their specific goals, situational contexts, preferences, and activities (e.g., context-sensitive information provision, self-customization, customer flexibility) (e.g., Epp and Price 2011). It enables firms to offer personalized customer journeys suited to the individual consumer context (e.g., Payne and Frow 2005) and helps customers more easily interact with multiple brand-owned touchpoints according to their current context, preferences, or activities. Context sensitivity helps increase the fit between a customer’s goals and a brand’s offering (goal-directed customer journeys; e.g., Patrício et al. 2011). Therefore, this dimension fosters perceptions of convenience, control, and risk reduction along the

customer journey. For example, depending on consumers’ preferences for returning a package to Amazon, they can print out package franking themselves, send the package franking via email to a friend, or employ a QR-code at the counter of the delivery service of their choice.

## Conceptual framework

### Theoretical background

We adopt Yang et al.’s (2012) approach and apply the underlying mechanisms of experience consumption to our context. Those authors distinguish between two sources of an experience: (1) the process, in the sense of a specific course through which end goals are gratified, and (2) the outcomes or gratifications of end goals. Both antecedents positively contribute to the experience consumption but differ in consumers’ mental representation.

According to construal-level theory (Liberman and Trope 1998), processes and outcomes are associated with different levels of abstraction. The procedural aspects of an experience are more concretely construed, while outcome aspects of an experience are more abstractly construed. For example, when watching a football game, the process through which the end goal (i.e., victory or defeat) unfolds is relatively concretely construed and rich in details, some of which are incidental or peripheral, compared with the outcome, which is relatively abstractly construed by focusing on few superordinate core features (e.g., joy, relief) of the event (Trope et al. 2007). Thus, procedural aspects of an experience “include subordinate information, such as instrumental goals ... [or] the subordinate ‘how’ aspects of experience” (Yang et al. 2012, p. 955). In other words, they refer to the feasibility or the “amount of time and effort a person must invest in an option” (Castaño et al. 2008, p. 321). Conversely, outcome aspects of an experience entail “more superordinate information, such as desirability ... reflect[ing] the superordinate ‘why’ aspect of experience” (Yang et al. 2012, p. 955). These aspects refer to the psychological gains from an option (Castaño et al. 2008).

Transferred to our context, we refer to a customer experience as the “customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey” (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 71). We assume that the feasibility or ease of living through multiple touchpoints along a customer journey constitutes a crucial aspect of any customer experience. This is because value for consumers resides in the cumulative perception of the touchpoints along the entire customer journey from pre-purchase to post-purchase (Lemke et al. 2011; Tax et al. 2013) and thus determines loyalty-enhancing behaviors (e.g., repurchasing, positive word of mouth). Therefore, drawing on construal-level theory, we propose that an effective CJD may be more concretely construed since it reflects the process of a

customer experience by promoting the feasibility aspects of living through a customer journey (Trope et al. 2007).

For example, when buying a new iPhone, consumers may associate the brand Apple with an overall dedication to simplicity across the brand's touchpoints (i.e., high thematic cohesion; e.g., iPhone, iPod, Apple stores) and consider the brand a relevant choice. Along their customer journey, they may also value the clear and consistent brand presentation across Apple's touchpoints (i.e., high consistency; e.g., uniform product design, identical menu navigation across Apple products) and the simple and convenient interactions along their entire customer journey (i.e., high context sensitivity; e.g., mobile order, online postponement of delivery, pickup in store). Taking all these aspects of an effective CJD into account may reduce the amount of time and effort consumers must invest in living through a customer journey. Accordingly, an effective CJD provides value to consumers through their perceptions of the feasibility of the process, i.e., the customer journey.

With respect to the responses in the customer experience definition provided previously, Brakus et al. (2009, p. 54) operationalize the construct of brand experience as the “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli [touchpoints].” These experiential responses have value “in and of themselves ... and result in positive outcomes” (Brakus et al. 2009, p. 65). As such, drawing on construal-level theory, we propose that brand experience reflects the outcome or gratifications of a customer experience because it refers to the psychological gains from an option. Accordingly, brand experience may be more abstractly construed (Trope et al. 2007). For example, customers may value the sensual stimulation of advertisements and promotional events, the affective feeling of curiosity when interacting with a service, the thoughts and fantasies that surface while wandering through a theme park, or the physical incitement at flagship stores or innovative restaurants. To have a brand experience, one or more touchpoints are sufficient and occur “whenever there is a direct or indirect interaction with the brand” (Brakus et al. 2009, p. 54).

## Conceptual model

Figure 1 provides an overview of our conceptual model. We propose that an effective CJD—based on the consumer's processing of procedural information along the customer journey—and brand experience—based on the consumer's experiential responses—are two distinct but interrelated value drivers of a customer experience. Note that similar to other empirical research in the field (e.g., Brakus et al. 2009), our study refers to the current customer experience. From a conceptual standpoint, experiences, however, are dynamic in nature (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), and therefore past experiences may influence both current and future experiences. Moreover, we draw from prior literature three established contingency

factors on customer loyalty that are often examined in combination: services versus goods, due to their likely difference in length of a customer journey (Berry et al. 2006); perceived switching costs, as a prominent moderator on customer loyalty effects; and brand involvement, for its potential impact on brand-related outcomes (e.g., Dick and Basu 1994).

## Hypotheses development

### Main effects

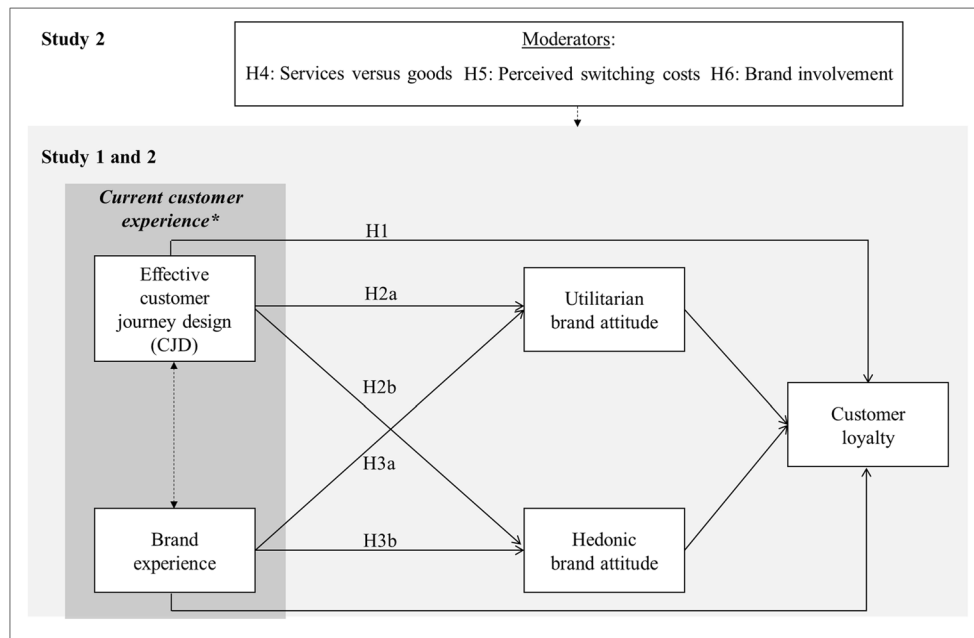
We propose that an effective CJD positively affects customer loyalty because, as mentioned previously, the process of perceiving brand-owned touchpoints along a customer journey represents a critical element of a customer experience (Yang et al. 2012). An enjoyable and smooth process as provided by an effective CJD addresses the “how” aspect of a customer experience (Trope and Liberman 2003) and may prompt favorable process evaluations, resulting in higher loyalty intent. In other words, as an effective CJD captures procedural perceptions, it can function as a value driver (Lemke et al. 2011) to a favorable customer experience that consumers wish to repeat. Accordingly, an effective CJD may exert a motivational effect on customer loyalty:

H1: An effective CJD positively influences customer loyalty.

### Mediating effects

We also consider the influence of an effective CJD and brand experience on brand attitude, and propose that both concepts embed value by themselves and thus positively influence brand evaluations, which ultimately result in positive brand attitude. Importantly, literature distinguishes between two forms of brand attitudes: utilitarian and hedonic. Utilitarian brand attitude represents the perceived effectiveness, functionality, and practicality a brand provides, whereas hedonic brand attitude refers to the perceived fun, excitement, and enjoyment a brand provides (Voss et al. 2003). We adapt Hamilton and Thompson's (2007) framework to explain the underlying mechanism of the influence of an effective CJD and brand experience on utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes. In short, this framework distinguishes between the emphasis of abstract versus concrete construals on desirability and feasibility aspects of alternatives.

An effective CJD—referring to the subordinate processing of multiple touchpoints—draws on a more concrete construal. Consumers base their perceptions of the design of multiple brand-owned touchpoints on how effective and helpful this design is to achieve a specific lifestyle, goal, or desire. This is because an effective CJD provides more contextualized and subordinate information referring to instrumental goals. As



**Fig. 1** Conceptual framework. Note: \* Effective CJD and brand experience are restricted to brand-owned touchpoints of a customer experience. The dotted line refers to the covariance between effective CJD and brand experience. All links as shown in this figure are estimated

“concrete construals shift attention towards feasibility considerations” (Hamilton and Thompson 2007, p. 547) in terms of value from the process, an effective CJD stresses the feasibility over the desirability aspects of alternatives, evoking greater preference for utilitarian aspects. Thus, we expect an effective CJD to more strongly affect utilitarian than hedonic brand attitudes.

Brand experience, by contrast, elicits a more abstract mental construal. Consumers base their evaluations of touchpoints on how stimulating and pleasurable they are (Brakus et al. 2009). Because “abstract construals shift attention towards desirability considerations” (Hamilton and Thompson 2007, p. 547) in terms of value from responses, brand experience may evoke rather hedonic considerations focusing on desirability aspects. Therefore, we expect brand experience to more strongly affect hedonic than utilitarian brand attitudes. Taken together, we hypothesize the following:

- H2: An effective CJD positively influences (a) utilitarian brand attitudes and (b) hedonic brand attitudes, with (c) the influence of an effective CJD on utilitarian brand attitudes being stronger than that on hedonic brand attitudes.
- H3: Brand experience positively influences (a) utilitarian brand attitudes and (b) hedonic brand attitudes, with (c) the influence of brand experience on hedonic brand attitudes being stronger than that on utilitarian brand attitudes.

**Moderating effects**

**Services versus goods** The magnitude of effects by an effective CJD and brand experience on consumer behavior may differ by

industry. We thus distinguish between whether the brand refers to a service or a manufactured goods industry. In general, services are less tangible, are perishable, and require higher participation of consumers in the process of production and consumption than goods. Owing to more interactions with the firm, greater heterogeneity may occur for services than for goods (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Consequently, consumers tend to perceive services as involving greater uncertainty, purchase risk, and complexity (Zeithaml 1981). For quality evaluations of services, consumers therefore put more emphasis on the process of service delivery than goods, which, among other ways, they can examine haptically to derive a quality assessment (Parasuraman et al. 1985). In addition, because services typically offer more touchpoints than goods (Berry et al. 2006), service providers face a greater challenge of not adequately implementing design principles to touchpoints along the customer journey.

Therefore, contributing to the reduction of perceived complexity and uncertainty, an effective CJD may be more essential for services than for goods in driving positive brand attitudes and customer loyalty. For example, consistency across touchpoints, in terms of consistent behavior from service personnel, may lead to higher perceived reliability and confidence, which in turn play a more important role in building loyalty in a service than a goods context (Dick and Basu 1994). By contrast, given their more tangible nature, consumer can, for example, haptically examine manufactured goods. This haptic experience evokes a sensorial response—alluding to the brand experience—that may result in higher product evaluations, such as more positive brand attitudes and (re-)purchase intentions (Grohmann et al. 2007). We thus posit that the influence of an effective CJD on consumer behavior is

more pronounced for services than for goods and that the opposite holds true for brand experience.

H4a: The influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger for services than goods.

H4b: The influence of brand experience on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger for goods than services.

**Perceived switching costs** “Perceived switching costs are consumer perceptions of the time, money, and effort associated with changing ... providers” (Jones et al. 2000, p. 262) and therefore are important to better understand and predict customer loyalty (Burnham et al. 2003). Drawing again on construal-level theory, we propose that low perceived switching costs increase the chance of switching behavior in the near future. Conversely, high switching costs represent distant-future events, making switching to another supplier a rather hypothetical situation (Wirtz et al. 2014). As prior research has shown (Wirtz et al. 2014, p. 464), in near-future events, “people tend to focus on the procedure,” whereas in distant-future events, they tend to focus on desirability aspects. Furthermore, in near-future events, people are more likely to rely on concrete mental representations of options (Castaño et al. 2008), and feasibility concerns about time and effort are more prevalent. By contrast, in distant-future events, people are more likely to rely on abstract mental representations by focusing on the benefits of an option in terms of abstract goals (Castaño et al. 2008).

Combining these insights with prior thoughts on an effective CJD and brand experience, we propose that an effective CJD, representing more concrete construal, exerts a stronger effect on consumers in situations of low perceived switching costs. Brand experience, representing more abstract construal, affects consumers more strongly in settings of high switching costs. Thus:

H5a: The influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger under low switching costs.

H5b: The influence of brand experience on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger under high switching costs.

**Brand involvement** Brand involvement “reflects the inherent need fulfillment, value expression, or interest the consumer” has in a brand (Mano and Oliver 1993, p. 452), thus evoking heightened brand relevance to the consumer (Zaichkowsky 1985). We again refer to construal-level theory, which suggests that the greater a person’s psychological closeness (vs. distance) to an object (e.g., a brand), the greater is the likelihood that he or she will mentally conceptualize this object concretely (i.e., concrete representation) than abstractly (i.e., abstract representation) (Liberian et al. 2007). As high brand involvement typically goes hand in hand with concrete and

rich information about the brand, we propose that a brand for which consumers show high brand involvement is likely to be concretely construed while a brand for which they show low brand involvement is likely to be more abstractly construed.

Accordingly, we argue that given the fit of mental representation between an effective CJD and high-involvement brands (i.e., more concretely construed), high brand involvement will increase the influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty and brand attitudes. Conversely, given the fit of mental representation between brand experience and low-involvement brands (i.e., more abstractly construed), we expect the effects of brand experience on customer loyalty and brand attitudes to be stronger under low brand involvement. Thus:

H6a: The influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger under high brand involvement.

H6b: The influence of brand experience on customer loyalty and brand attitudes is stronger under low brand involvement.

## Method

### Data collection and samples

To test our hypotheses, we conducted two large-scale studies in the United States and Europe. In Study 1, we addressed the operationalization of an effective CJD and tested its influence in the proposed conceptual framework (H1–H3). The main purpose of Study 2 was to validate the operationalization of the effective CJD scale, to test its influence in a different cultural background (Europe), and to collect additional data for the moderating hypotheses (H4–H6).

We collected data with the help of a commercial provider of an international market research panel, which allowed us to generate a large sample of U.S. and European consumers. Before doing so, we first ran a pretest to select brands, in which we explained the concept of CJD to 60 graduate students (57% female) and asked them to think about two brands they considered either strong or weak in CJD. We selected the brands mentioned most often and cross-validated our selection with expert judgments of customer experience consultants. This step resulted in a sample of 40 brands across 10 industries (apparel, automotive, consumer electronics and home appliances, financial services and insurance, information and communication, retailing, system catering, transportation and mail services, tourism, and leisure). For each industry, two brands indicated either strong or weak CJD.

In both studies, participants received online access to the questionnaire. To ensure their suitability to assess the effectiveness of CJD of a brand, each participant was randomly presented



a brand and asked to comment on his or her brand familiarity, using a three-item seven-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” 7 = “strongly agree”) (Kent and Allen 1994). Similar to prior research (Malär et al. 2012), we did this because the evaluation of an effective CJD requires that participants have already experienced multiple touchpoints of and thus are familiar with the brand. If the average mean of the familiarity items with the presented brand was below 4, the participant was forwarded to another randomly selected brand. Afterward, the participants were given random examples to help clarify the notion of touchpoints and customer journey (e.g., retail store, advertisements, call center, product) and were instructed to answer each question with regard to the last presented brand.

In Study 1, 2300 U.S. consumers (effective response rate = 62.49%) evaluated a randomly assigned brand that evoked satisfactory brand familiarity. In Study 2, 2312 European consumers completed the questionnaire (effective response rate = 41.11%). Web Appendix B provides an overview of the sample characteristics.

### Operationalizing effective customer journey design

In line with prior research (e.g., Brakus et al. 2009), we followed established scale development procedures to operationalize an effective CJD (Churchill 1979; Gerbing and Anderson 1988). Table 3 provides an overview of the scale development process.

**Item pool generation** At the beginning of the scale development procedure, we generated a large item pool for four dimensions of an effective CJD as proposed by Homburg et al. (2017) from a managerial perspective: thematic cohesion, consistency, context sensitivity, and connectivity of touchpoints. These four dimensions include the three dimensions (thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity of touchpoints) for which we found support from consumer interviews. Importantly, considering four dimensions ensured that we did not miss an important CJD dimension from the very beginning of the scale development procedure.

We employed two sources of information for item generation: a review of relevant conceptual literature (for an overview, see Homburg et al. 2017) and scales related to the four CJD dimensions—for example, brand equity (Keller 1993) for the dimension thematic cohesion of touchpoints, corporate identity (Simoes et al. 2005) for the dimension consistency of touchpoints, service/retail convenience for the dimension context sensitivity of touchpoints (Seiders et al. 2007), and multichannel integration (Oh et al. 2012) for the dimension connectivity of touchpoints. From this review of conceptual literature and existing scales, we generated 75 items. Some of the items needed to be reworded to create semantic style consistency (Brakus et al. 2009) so that the

word “touchpoint” appeared and referred to the evaluation of multiple touchpoints over time (i.e., the customer journey).

**Item reduction** As a scale with 75 items is too long to be usable in research and practice, we needed to reduce the initial item pool. To obtain an acceptable number of items, we relied on personal judgments of marketing experts and consumers and statistical purification procedures (Churchill 1979; Rossiter 2002; Voss et al. 2003). First, to assess face validity of the item pool, or the extent to which a measure reflects what it is intended to measure (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), we followed common and recommended marketing practice (e.g., Guo et al. 2017). We explained the concept of an effective CJD and its dimensions to five marketing faculty members and asked them to assign each item to one of the introduced dimensions. We conservatively dropped items that did not receive a 100% consistent assignment across the faculty members and further refined some items according to their suggestions to increase comprehension and relevance (Guo et al. 2017).

Second, we submitted the remaining item pool to a quantitative pretest with 32 students to ensure content validity, or the degree to which a measure’s items represent a proper sample of the theoretical content domain of a construct (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). After explaining the notion of touchpoints and an effective CJD, we asked the participants to evaluate the extent to which the items describe brands “they regard as outstanding or that they would stay loyal to” on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “not at all descriptive,” 7 = “extremely descriptive”). We retained items with a mean value greater than 4.0 and a standard deviation less than 2.0 (Brakus et al. 2009). Importantly, we carefully formulated our proposed CJD items by asking consumers whether they could effortlessly and comprehensively understand them. We modified or dropped items according to this step (Guo et al. 2017).

Finally, we employed statistical purification procedures using data from Study 1 and Study 2 (Churchill 1979; Rossiter 2002; Voss et al. 2003). As we intended to develop a scale applicable across industries, we ran tests for measurement invariance (e.g., Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). The results indicated partial metric invariance between industries, thus allowing us to aggregate the data across industries (e.g., Wang and Netemeyer 2002). We then conducted analyses on an aggregate level for all brands and centered the means of the items at zero to remove any brand effects (Homburg et al. 2015).

**Scale dimensionality** As noted previously, our initial item set also included items to measure a fourth dimension, connectivity of touchpoints, as indicated by Homburg et al. (2017), whose separate existence, however, we could not confirm from a consumer’s perspective on CJD. Specifically, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, and model comparisons of models with different combinations and

**Table 3** Overview of the scale development process for effective CJD

Process steps	Data and methods	Results
(1) Conceptualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature review</li> <li>Qualitative interviews with 34 consumers: Description of effective CJD for one positive and one negative brand example <a href="#">Web Appendix A</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of CJD dimensions</li> <li>Effective CJD is salient on a <math>\pm</math> continuum</li> </ul>
(2) Item pool generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature review</li> <li>Review of existing scales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial set of 75 items</li> </ul>
(3) Item reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face validity check with five faculty members</li> <li>Content validity test with 32 consumers</li> <li>Collection of data (Study 1)</li> <li>Statistical procedures (EFA, CFA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced set of 55 items</li> <li>Reduced set of 35 items</li> <li>Reduced set of 21 items</li> </ul>
(4) Scale dimensionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discriminant validity between the CJD dimensions: Fornell–Larcker criterion</li> <li>Comparison of different models with CFAs: selection of the best model based on fit indices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model with three dimensions (thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity) shows the best model fit (Table 4)</li> </ul>
(5) Scale parsimony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further item reduction via indicator reliabilities to achieve scale parsimony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final scale with 12 items (Table 5)</li> </ul>
(6) Validation of the final scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation with statistical procedures (EFA, CFA)</li> <li>Collection of additional data (Study 2)</li> <li>Calculation of steps 3 to 5 with new data (Study 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results are stable—they could be verified with an additional data set (Table 5)</li> </ul>
(7) Discriminant validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EFA of effective CJD and brand experience (Table 7, Panel A)</li> <li>Fornell–Larcker criterion between the CJD and brand experience dimensions (Table 7, Panel B)</li> <li>Data of Studies 1 and 2 were used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discriminant validity of the CJD dimensions from brand experience dimensions is shown (Table 7)</li> </ul>
(8) Use of scale to analyze outcomes of effective CJD (nomological validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structural equation modeling (with mediation analysis/bootstrapping; data of Studies 1 and 2 were used)</li> <li>Multi-group comparisons of structural equation models (data of Study 2 was used)</li> <li>Fig. 1 shows the conceptual model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective CJD has a positive impact on customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly through brand attitude</li> <li>Effective CJD and brand experience show distinct underlying mechanisms with regard to utilitarian versus hedonic brand attitude (Table 8)</li> <li>Good vs service context, switching costs, and brand involvement moderate these relationships (Table 9)</li> </ul>

numbers of CJD dimensions (see Table 4) clearly indicated that context sensitivity and connectivity of touchpoints constitute one factor. Specifically, Model 5 in Table 4 shows the best model fit. We therefore combined items of these two dimensions into the dimension context sensitivity of touchpoints. This finding of three CJD dimensions is consistent with the analysis of our consumer interviews.

**Scale parsimony** To develop a parsimonious scale that lends itself to marketing practice, we selected 12 of the 21 items that

best reflect the conceptual definition of the three CJD dimensions. In line with prior research (Homburg et al. 2015; Whan Park et al. 2010), we chose the items with the highest indicator reliabilities for each dimension. This resulted in the elimination of semantically similar items, leading to no significant loss of content validity and reliability. Importantly, the model with 12 items achieved better goodness-of-fit values than the model with 21 items.

An EFA with the final pool of 12 items revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (Study 1: variance explained =

**Table 4** Model comparisons for determination of scale dimensionality

No.	Model	$\chi^2$ (df) <sup>a</sup>	$\chi^2 / df^a$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC
1	Null <sup>b</sup>	8368.228 (189)	44.27	.780	.755	.137	.421	141,251.551
2	One factor	4652.733 (189)	24.61	.880	.866	.101	.056	137,536.057
3	Two factors (cjd1/cjd2 & cjd3/cjd4 combined)	1454.355 (188)	7.73	.966	.962	.054	.027	134,339.678
4	Three factors (cjd1/cjd2 combined)	1411.889 (186)	7.59	.967	.963	.053	.027	134,301.213
5	Three factors (cjd3/cjd4 combined)	<b>849.925 (186)</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>.982</b>	<b>.980</b>	<b>.039</b>	<b>.021</b>	<b>133,739.249</b>
6	Four factors	1501.201 (185)	8.11	.965	.960	.055	.043	134,392.524

cjd1: thematic cohesion of touchpoints, cjd2: consistency of touchpoints, cjd3: context sensitivity of touchpoints, cjd4: connectivity of touchpoints. If not stated differently, models refer to higher-order construct

<sup>a</sup> Is a direct function of the sample size. Given our large sample,  $\chi^2 / df$  is more meaningful for judging the model's fit

<sup>b</sup> Four-factor model with all covariances of the factors restricted to zero; served as the baseline model for comparison

95.4%; Study 2: 96.2%). In line with our conceptualization, a CFA with the final 12-item scale confirms that effective CJD is a second-order reflective construct (see Table 5). Specifically, standardized factor loadings were all high and significant ( $p < .01$ ) ranging from .79 to .85 between the first-order factors and the respective indicators and from .87 to .97 between the second-order construct (effective CJD) and its dimensions (thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity of touchpoints). Moreover, the final scale showed excellent global and local fit statistics: Satorra–Bentler corrected chi-square (degrees of freedom) = 109.838 (51), comparative fit index (CFI) = .99, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .99, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .01, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .02. Examination of the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which requires that for every pair of factors, the squared estimated correlation should be smaller than each factor’s average variance extracted (AVE), revealed that discriminant validity exists for each of the three factors (Study 1:  $r^2_{\text{cohesion\_consis}} = .63$ ;  $r^2_{\text{cohesion\_context sens}} = .55$ ;  $r^2_{\text{consis\_context sens}} = .59$ ;  $\text{AVE}_{\text{cohesion}} = .66$ ;  $\text{AVE}_{\text{consis}} = .71$ ;  $\text{AVE}_{\text{context sens}} = .67$ ). The composite reliabilities (CR) for the CJD dimensions are at a minimum of .89 and the AVE at a minimum of .64. In a similar vein, for the second-order construct effective CJD, the

CR is .95 and AVE is .87 (Study 2: CR = .93, AVE = .82), thus demonstrating appropriate fit to the data (Hu and Bentler 1995).

To provide empirical evidence for the exhaustiveness of our scale, we collected additional data ( $n = 190$ ; mean age = 20.26 years; 67% female) and set up a model with effective CJD as the independent variable and an overall measure of customer journey effectiveness (“How do you assess the customer journey experience of the brand X?” 1 = “like not at all”, 7 = “like very much”; 1 = “very bad”, 7 = “very good”; 1 = “not at all appealing”, 7 = “very appealing”; and “This brand offers a great customer journey experience”: 1 = “totally disagree”, 7 = “totally agree”;  $\alpha = .92$ , CR = .92, AVE = .74, lowest item reliability = .61) as the dependent variable. This analysis shows that effective CJD explains 66% of our dependent variable, which we consider highly appropriate and comparable to literature using a similar approach (e.g., Homburg et al. 2015).

### Measurement of additional constructs of the conceptual model

To measure brand experience, we used the 12-item scale developed by Brakus et al. (2009). The scale measures sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral responses as evoked by

**Table 5** Effective CJD scale

Constructs and items	Cronbach’s $\alpha$		Indicator reliability		CR		AVE	
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
Effective CJD					.95	.93	.87	.82
a. Thematic cohesion of touchpoints			.91	.79				
b. Consistency of touchpoints			.76	.70				
c. Context sensitivity of touchpoints			.95	.97				
a. Thematic cohesion of touchpoints	.89	.88			.89	.88	.66	.64
The touchpoints of this brand are thematically rooted.			.68	.63				
The touchpoints of this brand have a clear thematic philosophy.			.67	.63				
This brand pursues a thematic concept.			.71	.73				
This brand stands for a specific theme and campaigns for it.			.58	.59				
b. Consistency of touchpoints	.91	.90			.91	.90	.71	.69
This brand conveys a uniform impression across different touchpoints.			.73	.70				
This brand is consistent across different touchpoints.			.69	.67				
The presentation of the brand’s various touchpoints emits a homogeneous image.			.72	.70				
Different touchpoints of this brand are designed in a concerted way.			.70	.71				
c. Context sensitivity of touchpoints	.89	.89			.89	.89	.67	.66
When I encounter this brand, it takes my specific activities, interests or needs into account.			.62	.64				
Different touchpoints of this brand are well aligned to my personal circumstances.			.71	.66				
I have the impression that different touchpoints of this brand fit well into my daily routines.			.71	.70				
The connection between different touchpoints of this brand allows me simple and fast activities.			.64	.65				

brand-owned touchpoints. In Study 2, given low item reliabilities, we needed to eliminate four items of the initial item pool, which left a final set of eight items to measure brand experience. Note that we measured effective CJD and brand experience from a retrospective standpoint, rather than trying to capture real-time experiences, for two reasons (Calder et al. 2016). First, a real-time measurement of experiences may be biased or alter the experience because of its direct measurement. Second, real-time experiences are often inaccessible after the immediate experience is over (Kahneman 2011). As Kahneman (2011, p. 381) claims, “the remembering self is sometimes wrong, but it is the one that keeps score and governs what we learn from living, and it is the one that makes decisions.” Accordingly, remembered experiences are those that determine future behavior, such as loyalty.

To measure brand attitude, we included the scale for hedonic and utilitarian brand attitudes developed by Voss et al. (2003). The scale consists of 10 adjective pairs, five of which refer to utilitarian brand attitude and five to hedonic brand attitude. To facilitate the comparison of our results with prior investigations of brand experience, we used the same five customer loyalty items as Brakus et al. (2009). Finally, to measure the moderators, we relied on the categorization of the brands into services versus goods based on the judgments of three research assistants (Lovett et al. 2014) and a subsequent validation through industry codes (Vomberg et al. 2015), on a scale adapted from Jones et al. (2000) to our context for the assessment of consumers' perceived switching costs, and Zaichkowsky's (1985) measurement instrument for brand involvement as used by Brakus et al. (2009).

All items were measured on seven-point Likert scales. Web Appendix C provides a complete list of our measures and their psychographic properties, including AVEs. Table 6 shows descriptive statistics and the correlations of the variables investigated in our framework. For all constructs, all local fit statistics met or were above the recommended thresholds. The measurement models show good fit (Study 1: CFI = .96;

TLI = .95; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .05; Study 2: CFI = .95; TLI = .94; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .05). We assessed discriminant validity, which was confirmed for all constructs. Importantly, to test for discriminant validity between an effective CJD and brand experience, we used (1) an EFA revealing the suggested two factors (Table 7, Panel A); (2) a CFA for comparisons of one- and two-factor models, with the two-factor model showing better fit indices and a lower Akaike information criterion (AIC) value ( $\Delta AIC = 2197$ ); and (3) the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table 7, Panel B). In summary, brand experience and effective CJD clearly show discriminant validity and represent two distinct constructs.

To account for potential common method bias, we used two types of remedies. First, as a procedural, a priori remedy, we used a variety of scales, pretested the questionnaire, assured respondents of their anonymity and confidentiality, emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers (to help reduce the possibility of bias due to self-presentation), and arranged items and constructs in random order (Hulland et al. 2018). Second, as a statistical, post hoc remedy, we conducted Harman's single-factor test, the partial correlation procedure (Lindell and Whitney 2001), and the unmeasured latent method factor approach (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Overall, the results of our common method testing suggest that common method variance does not pose a serious threat to our results.

## Results

### Tests of hypotheses

We estimated the structural equation model (SEM) using Mplus 7. Relying on literature on how to test mediation effects (Zhao et al. 2010), we employed a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 repetitions to estimate the indirect effects of an effective CJD (brand experience) on both utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes within 95% confidence intervals.

**Table 6** Descriptive statistics and correlations of variables

Construct	Study 1							Study 2								
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Effective CJD	5.04	.02	<b>.87</b>					4.77	.02	<b>.82</b>						
2 Brand experience	4.24	.03	.64	<b>.83</b>				3.66	.03	.54	<b>.84</b>					
3 Customer loyalty	5.13	.03	.62	.55	<b>.73</b>			4.64	.03	.59	.46	<b>.68</b>				
4 Utilitarian brand attitudes	5.1	.03	.54	.47	.64	<b>.75</b>		4.85	.03	.42	.25	.52	<b>.60</b>			
5 Hedonic brand attitudes	4.65	.03	.51	.60	.59	.77	<b>.76</b>	4.30	.03	.40	.48	.46	.55	<b>.60</b>		
6 Perceived switching costs								4.58	.03	.01	-.15	-.02	-.05	-.12	<b>.59</b>	
7 Brand involvement								4.34	.03	.49	.47	.67	.59	.50	-.09	<b>.65</b>

AVE values, indicated in bold and italics, appear on the diagonal. The calculation of the correlation coefficients used the means of the scores of the indicators that make up each of the latent variables

**Table 7** Discriminant validity between effective CJD and brand experience

Panel A: EFA		Factor	
		1	2
Effective CJD	Thematic cohesion of touchpoints	<b>.8884</b>	.2872
	Consistency of touchpoints	<b>.9236</b>	.2268
	Context sensitivity of touchpoints	<b>.7923</b>	.3266
Brand Experience	Sensory response	.3919	<b>.8100</b>
	Affective response	.2885	<b>.8699</b>
	Behavioral response	.2789	<b>.8167</b>
	Intellectual response	.2797	<b>.8695</b>

Panel B: Fornell–Larcker criterion		Study 1			Study 2		
	Construct	1	2	FL	1	2	FL
1	Effective CJD	<b>.87</b>			<b>.82</b>		
2	Brand experience	.41	<b>.83</b>	✓	.29	<b>.84</b>	✓

Squared correlations are indicated. The diagonal shows the AVE in italics. The Fornell–Larcker (FL) criterion is met, when for each pair the squared correlation is lower than the respective AVEs

With one exception (H3a; effect not significant in Study 2<sup>1</sup>), the results of the estimated baseline SEM are highly similar between the U.S. (Study 1) and the European (Study 2) samples. For exemplification purposes, we report on the U.S. sample in the following paragraphs. Table 8 reports results for both studies.

**Main and mediating effects**

An effective CJD influences customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly, through utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes. This means that utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes partially mediate the effect of an effective CJD on customer loyalty. In support of H1 effective CJD positively influences customer loyalty (.30,  $p < .01$ ). The indirect effect of an effective CJD on customer loyalty (through utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes) is .16 ( $.44 \times .31 + .23 \times .09$ ), amounting to a total effect of .46 ( $.30 + .16$ ). In a similar vein, even though not hypothesized, we replicate the findings from Brakus et al. (2009) in that we find a direct (.26,  $p < .01$ ) and indirect effect of brand experience on customer loyalty (.11 =  $.51 \times .09 + .22 \times .31$ ), yielding a total effect of .37 ( $.26 + .11$ ). Thus, both an effective CJD and brand experience have a concurrent effect on customer loyalty. As assumed conceptually, this empirically proves that an effective CJD and brand experience are two crucial value sources for a brand.

For the effects of an effective CJD and brand experience on brand attitudes, the results reveal two distinct mechanisms. As

we postulated in H2c, the effect of an effective CJD is higher on utilitarian brand attitudes (.44, H2a) than on hedonic brand attitudes (.23, H2b). By contrast, as postulated in H3c, the effect of brand experience is higher on hedonic brand attitudes (.51, H3b) than on utilitarian brand attitudes (.22, H3a). We applied two chi-square tests to demonstrate that the differences between these effects are significant. Specifically, the first chi-square test focused on H3c and involved a comparison of two models: in Model 1, we constrained the effects of an effective CJD on utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes to be equal and calculated Model 2 without that constraint. The chi-square difference was significant ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 37.89$ ,  $p < .01$ ), in support of H2c. Similarly, the second chi-square test focused on the effects of brand experience on utilitarian and hedonic brand attitudes. The chi-square difference was also significant ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 47.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ), in support of H3c. In summary, an effective CJD is a stronger predictor of utilitarian brand attitudes, and brand experience is a stronger predictor of hedonic brand attitudes.

Last, in line with research on attitude–behavior consistency, the effects of positive utilitarian (.31) and hedonic (.09) brand attitudes on customer loyalty were significant ( $p < .01$ ). Overall, our model explains approximately 63% (Study 1; Study 2: 57%) of the variance in customer loyalty. Thus, our model provides evidence that the analyzed loyalty drivers—especially an effective CJD—are of high importance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A multi-group analysis comparing path coefficients across industries indicated that some industries (fast-moving consumer goods, information and communication technology, and restaurant) show a significant, positive effect while other industries show a non-significant effect for H4a in Study 2. These differences might explain the non-significant finding for this effect in Study 2.

<sup>2</sup> Testing for alternative models by removing paths (as proposed in H1 and brand experience → customer loyalty) from the suggested model shows deterioration in model fit, while adding paths (brand experience → CJD, or vice versa, or experience ⇆ CJD) shows no improvement in model fit or explained variance of our dependent variable customer loyalty. We therefore keep the suggested model in the interest of parsimony.

**Table 8** Results of hypotheses testing: Main effects (SEM)

(Hypothesized) effect	Study 1			Study 2		
	Estimate	<i>p</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	Estimate	<i>p</i>	Conclusion
H1: Effective CJD → customer loyalty	.30	.00		.27	.00	H1 supported
BE → customer loyalty	.26	.00		.38	.00	
H2a: Effective CJD → utilitarian brand attitude	.44	.00	37.89	.44	.00	H2a supported
H2b: Effective CJD → hedonic brand attitude	.23	.00		.19	.00	H2b supported
H2c: H2a > H2b						H2c supported
H3a: BE → utilitarian brand attitude	.22	.00	47.36	.04	.26	H3a (partially) supported
H3b: BE → hedonic brand attitude	.51	.00		.45	.00	H3b supported
H3c: H3b > H3a						H3c supported
utilitarian brand attitude → customer loyalty	.31	.00		.24	.00	
hedonic brand attitude → customer loyalty	.09	.02		.06	.05	
<b>Model Fit</b>						
$\chi^2$ (df)	4197 (685)			4010 (554)		
CLI	.96			.94		
TLI	.95			.93		
RMSEA	.05			.05		
SRMR	.05			.07		

BE = brand experience. Standardized estimates are shown

### Moderating effects

Similar to prior research (Malär et al. 2011), we followed Bagozzi and Yi's (2012) suggested procedure and relied on a multi-group SEM to test our moderating hypotheses for a service versus a good context (H4), perceived switching costs (H5), and brand involvement (H6). Specifically, to test H5 and H6, we conducted a median split to create two sub-samples for switching costs (H5) and brand involvement (H6), respectively, each with low and high values of the moderators (Malär

et al. 2011). We then simultaneously analyzed our baseline SEM in both sub-samples. Again, chi-square difference tests (with  $\Delta df = 1$ ) compared results of two competing (i.e., unconstrained vs. constrained) models. We applied this procedure for all three moderators on the direct and indirect effects of effective CJD (or brand experience) on customer loyalty. Table 9 provides an overview of the results.

H4a predicts that the direct and indirect effects of an effective CJD on customer loyalty are stronger for services than goods, while H4b predicts that brand experience is more

**Table 9** Results of hypotheses testing: Multi-group comparison of SEMs

Effect	Goods versus service				Perceived switching costs				Brand involvement			
	H	Estimate	<i>p</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	H	Estimate	<i>p</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	H	Estimate	<i>p</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$
Effective CJD → loyalty	H4a Good	.16	.00	6.6***	H5a Low	.38	.00	7.6***	H6a Low	.12	.00	12.6***
	Service	.34	.00			High	.20			.00	High	
BE → loyalty	H4b Good	.47	.00	3.6*	H5b Low	.31	.00	3.4*	H6b Low	.55	.00	32.9***
	Service	.33	.00			High	.41			.00	High	
Effective CJD → UT → loyalty	H4a Good	.12	.00	3.6*	H5a Low	.30	.00	5.7**	H6a Low	.03	.01	28.3***
	Service	.19	.00			High	.16			.00	High	
Effective CJD → HED → loyalty	Good	.04	.01	.1	Low	.13	.00	.56	Low	.01	.41	14.2***
	Service	.01	.40			High	.10			.00	High	
BE → UT → loyalty	H4b Good	.03	.05	2.8*	H5b Low	.01	.62	.45	H6b Low	.03	.31	3.4*
	Service	.01	.54			High	.04			.23	High	
BE → HED → loyalty	Good	.09	.00	3.6*	Low	.22	.00	7.8***	Low	.37	.00	13.2***
	Service	.02	.40			High	.39			.00	High	

H = hypothesis, BE = brand experience, UT = utilitarian brand attitude, HED = hedonic brand attitude, good = manufactured good

\*  $p \leq .1$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ . H refers to both the direct and indirect effects of effective CJD (brand experience) on customer loyalty

important in a goods than a service context. The results show a stronger direct effect of an effective CJD on customer loyalty ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 6.6, p < .01$ ), in support of H4a, and a stronger indirect impact of effective CJD through utilitarian brand attitudes on customer loyalty ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 3.6, p < .1$ ) than in a goods context. Conversely, brand experience shows a stronger direct effect ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 3.6, p < .1$ ) and an indirect effect through hedonic brand attitudes on customer loyalty ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 3.6, p < .1$ ) for goods than services, thus partially confirming H4b.

Furthermore, we found that an effective CJD exerts a stronger direct (H5a:  $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 7.6, p < .01$ ) and indirect ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 5.7, p < .05$ ) effect through utilitarian brand attitudes on customer loyalty under low than high switching costs. By contrast, under high switching costs, brand experience becomes more important for attaining customer loyalty, directly (H5b:  $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 3.4; p < .1$ ) and indirectly ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 7.8, p < .01$ ) through hedonic brand attitudes.

Finally, as H6a predicts, the effect of an effective CJD on customer loyalty is stronger for high brand involvement situations, both directly ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 12.6, p < .01$ ) and indirectly ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 28.3, p < .01$  for effective CJD  $\rightarrow$  UT  $\rightarrow$  Loy;  $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 14.2, p < .01$  for UT  $\rightarrow$  HED  $\rightarrow$  Loy). Conversely, brand experience more strongly influences customer loyalty directly (H6b:  $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 32.9, p < .01$ ) and indirectly ( $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 3.4, p < .1$  for BE  $\rightarrow$  UT  $\rightarrow$  Loy;  $\chi^2(\Delta df = 1) = 13.2, p < .01$  for BE  $\rightarrow$  HED  $\rightarrow$  Loy) when brand involvement is low, in support of H6b.

## Discussion

Practitioners and researchers appraise an effective CJD as an important source of customer value in increasingly complex and digitalized consumer markets. Research, however, has neither operationalized nor investigated the consequences of an effective CJD—over and above the effects of brand experience—on important variables of consumer behavior. This article contributes to these pertinent research issues both theoretically and managerially.

## Theoretical implications

Our research offers three major implications for understanding an effective CJD and its effects on important variables of consumer behavior. First, it adds to the identification of value drivers of customer experiences (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). While extant literature has highlighted the importance of managing touchpoints along the customer journey and its overall perception by consumers, this issue has received scant research attention. A key reason for this may be the absence of a well-developed conceptualization and operationalization of an effective CJD. We conceptualized, operationalized, and

validated a scale for the measurement of an effective CJD that captures consumers' conception of CJD with respect to the thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity of brand-owned touchpoints. The effective CJD scale is empirically solid, easy to administer, applicable across industries, and related to the consumer perspective. Although we demonstrate the generalizability of our scale across 10 consumer industries, further research might adopt and, if needed, adapt the CJD scale to other consumer industries and a business-to-business context. Importantly, with regard to customer experience, our research extends the focus of responsive outcomes at brand-owned touchpoints (e.g., captured by brand experience) to a procedural view by demonstrating the positive influence of an effective CJD on customer loyalty. As such, further research might use our scale to test the influence of an effective CJD on other dependent variables, such as willingness to pay, and to investigate other relevant moderating factors (e.g., aspects of timing such as frequency and cadence of touchpoints or privacy concerns) that might also be essential in the context of effective CJD.

Second, our conceptual framework provides a potentially important set of insights to complement existing knowledge on value drivers in literature streams of customer experience, customer journey, and brand management. Specifically, our results bring to light the existence of two complementary value drivers of customer experiences: an effective CJD and brand experience (see Fig. 1). We provide empirical evidence of their concurrent impact, linking both concepts to customer loyalty and brand attitudes. In other words, consumers value not only touchpoint-related sensations, feelings, thoughts, and actions by themselves (brand experience) but also their thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive character along the entire customer journey (an effective CJD). Consequently, our research extends the focus of a single experiential value driver such as brand experience to examine its interplay with an effective CJD. Further research should more thoroughly incorporate both perspectives when investigating customer experiences. Thereby, since we did not consider temporal effects between past, current, and future periods of brand experience and an effective CJD in our investigation, a longitudinal study that includes data on the dynamic relationships of our focal constructs would be a fruitful research avenue. Such an investigation might also shed further light on the causal and dynamic nature between an effective CJD and brand experience and, in doing so, further reduce endogeneity concerns.

Third, prior research has left unanswered the question of the relative importance of an effective CJD and brand experience as critical variables of consumer behavior. In response, we show that an effective CJD and brand experience differ in their underlying processes of affecting the customer experience. In detail, we demonstrate that an effective CJD and brand experience affect customer loyalty indirectly through

different mechanisms: an effective CJD proved to be a stronger predictor of utilitarian brand attitudes, while brand experience was a stronger predictor of hedonic brand attitudes. As such, we reveal two distinct experience-based antecedents of hedonic and utilitarian brand attitudes. By contrast, prior research has focused on product- or retail-specific antecedents (e.g., Voss et al. 2003). In that sense, we extend research on utilitarian versus hedonic benefits and attitude from a narrow touchpoint-based level to a more general experience-based level and therefore encourage researchers in this area to adopt this broadened unit of analysis.

Moreover, the results of our moderating hypotheses provide further support for the existence of the two distinct underlying mechanisms of an effective CJD and brand experience to attain customer loyalty, as shown in the baseline SEM. Specifically, for services and contexts with low switching costs or high brand involvement, an effective CJD more strongly affects customer loyalty directly and indirectly through utilitarian brand attitudes. For goods and contexts with high switching costs or low brand involvement, brand experience more strongly affects customer loyalty directly and indirectly through hedonic brand attitudes. The development of a theoretically grounded set of mechanisms and the identification of specific settings in which they are prevalent represent a substantial advancement over existing knowledge on how experiential value drivers affect customer loyalty.

## Managerial implications

This research provides new insights that might enhance the effectiveness of designing customer journeys in marketing practice. First, our results highlight the importance of an effective CJD for attaining customer loyalty. While this may seem intuitive and managers might already realize that it is not a single touchpoint but the effective design of multiple brand-owned touchpoints into meaningful customer journeys that matters to consumers, they often still allocate significantly more time and money to developing single touchpoints that provide high sensory stimulation to attain a positive brand experience. Our study shows that an effective CJD indeed matters to consumers, substantially affecting customer loyalty.

Second, our analyses suggest that in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of CJD, managers should focus on what consumers perceive of and value in CJDs: thematic cohesion, consistency, and context sensitivity of touchpoints. As such, we offer practitioners a common, generalizable understanding of what an effective CJD is and provide clear strategic directions for designing the customer journey in the firm in this respect. Specifically, such a common understanding of an effective CJD can facilitate cross-functional collaboration among different departments responsible for different touchpoints (e.g., product design, communications, complaint management). Furthermore, as marketers increasingly engage

in projects to understand the tenets of an effective CJD and improve the effectiveness of corresponding innovation projects, they could use our scale to evaluate, monitor, benchmark, and justify CJD investments. The scale is short and thus easy to administer and is not restricted to an industry context in a business-to-consumer setting. It is therefore valuable for a broad audience of managers in consumer markets.

Third, our results reveal that an effective CJD and brand experience are two value drivers with distinct underlying mechanisms. Both influence customer loyalty directly and indirectly through brand attitudes. However, whereas an effective CJD predominantly affects utilitarian brand attitudes, brand experience predominantly affects hedonic brand attitudes. Considering that in today's commoditized markets any offering should cover utilitarian and hedonic aspects, managers should closely align the concepts of an effective CJD and brand experience with overall branding. Our final recommendation pertains to allocation decisions in times of scarce resources: managers should particularly devote time and money to the effectiveness of CJD when they are operating in the service industry or face situations of low switching costs and high brand involvement. By contrast, they should focus on improving the brand experience when operating in a manufactured goods industry or face situations of high switching costs and low brand involvement. Doing so might further increase customers' loyalty to the brand in the long run.

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