

When Citizenship Meets Consumption: Measuring Customer Experience Quality in For-Profit Public Services

Quand Citoyenneté Rencontre Consommation : Mesurer la Qualité de l'Expérience Client dans les Services Publics à But Lucratif

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Abstract:

In liberalized markets, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) face a dual reality—rewarding their public mission while competing with private firms. Therefore, SOEs must balance public service mandates with commercial competition. Existing customer experience (CX) scales, designed for the private sector, fail to capture the unique drivers of CX in these hybrid SOEs. This study develops and validates a multidimensional scale, EXQ-PUB, to address this gap. Grounded in service-dominant logic and the resource-based view, it introduces a novel dimension, *Economic Patriotism*, reflecting customers' symbolic attachment to national institutions. A sequential mixed-methods approach—using laddering interviews and two surveys with Tunisie Telecom customers—confirmed a four-dimensional, second-order formative structure: Economic Patriotism, Peace of Mind, Outcome Focus, and Product Value. PLS-SEM analysis revealed that specialized marketing capabilities positively influence EXQ-PUB, which in turn drives attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, fully mediating this relationship. The findings show that CX in public services is profoundly shaped by socio-symbolic motivations, extending CX theory to public-private contexts and providing managers a diagnostic tool for enhancing competitiveness and trust.

Keywords— Customer Experience Quality, State-Owned Enterprises, Economic Patriotism, Scale Development, Customer Loyalty.

Résumé :

Dans les marchés libéralisés, les entreprises publiques (EP) doivent concilier des mandats de service public avec la concurrence commerciale. Les échelles d'expérience client (CX) existantes, conçues pour le secteur privé, ne parviennent pas à capturer les déterminants uniques de la CX dans ces EP hybrides. Cette étude développe et valide une échelle multidimensionnelle, l'EXQ-PUB, pour combler cette lacune. S'appuyant sur la logique service-dominant et la vision basée sur les ressources, elle introduit une nouvelle dimension, le *Patriotisme Économique*, reflétant l'attachement symbolique des clients aux institutions nationales. Une approche séquentielle à méthodes mixtes—utilisant des entretiens laddering et deux enquêtes auprès de clients de Tunisie Télécom—a confirmé une structure formative de second ordre à quatre dimensions : Patriotisme Économique, Tranquillité d'Esprit, Focus sur le Résultat et Valeur Produit. Une analyse PLS-SEM a révélé que les capacités marketing spécialisées influencent positivement l'EXQ-PUB, qui à son tour stimule la loyauté attitudinale et comportementale, en médiatisant entièrement cette relation. Les résultats montrent que la CX dans les services publics est profondément influencée par des motivations socio-symboliques, étendant la théorie de la CX aux contextes public-privé et fournissant aux gestionnaires un outil de diagnostic pour améliorer la compétitivité et la confiance.

Mots-clés — Qualité de l'Expérience Client, Entreprises Publiques, Patriotisme Économique, Développement d'Échelle, Loyauté du Client.

Introduction

The customer experience quality became cornerstone of consumer relationship management (Verhoef et al., 2009; Kim and Choi, 2013; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Foroudi et al., 2016; Eskiler and Safak, 2022; Almidfa, 2024), recognized as holistic assessment of the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical response to a brand, a firm or a part of the firm (Shaw and Dallos, 2005). While extensively researched in the private sector, there is no consensus on one single well-accepted measurement scale from researchers to measure CX due to the complexity and multidisciplinary of the concept. This has led to fragmented empirical research on customer experience, leaving practitioners without a reliable tool for its improvement (Gahler et al., 2023). In addition to that, most interests are focused on CX measurement scale in the private sector, leading to a critical theoretical and methodological gap, particularly acute in the public sector. The CX remains underexplored in an essential and prevalent context which is the competitive state-owned enterprises (SOE). Researchers and practitioners (Almidfa, 2024; Deloitte, 2023; McKinsey and Company, 2023; Gaulè & Jovarauskiene, 2022) pay particular attention to stress the importance of the customer experience in public companies to their citizens.

SOE including telecommunication providers, banks, and airlines, depict specificities requiring them to operate in a unique dual reality. On one hand, they are primarily expected to serve citizens-ensuring equity, continuity, and national interest (Goudarzi and Guenoun, 2010; Sabadie, 2003). On the other hand, they compete for customers against profit-driven firm. This competitive pressure drives SOEs to focus on reinforcing customer relationships and loyalty. The CX is well-studied in the private sector, and the service quality has been extensively explored in the pure public administrative. However, our knowledge about how CX is formed in the competitive SOE's unique context is little. Actually, SOE consumers did not limit their experience evaluation only on traditional CX dimensions (Almidfa, 2024), yet, they rely on their relationship with their nation. Thereby, CX drivers in the private firm context encompass functional and emotional aspects (Abid et al., 2025), instead, consumers of SOE are suspected to be fundamentally distinct by being sensitive to symbolic act of supporting a national institution, a concept we term **Economic Patriotism**. This goes beyond related concepts like consumer ethnocentrism (a general preference for domestic goods) or nationalism; it is an active, sacrifice-oriented willingness to support a national institution as an expression of social identity and civic duty.

To fulfill this gap, this paper attempts to answer the following research question: How customer experience quality is conceptualized, measured and validated in the context of competitive SOE?

By answering this question, this research provides three contributions. First, we propose and validate a multi-dimensional, hierarchical scale of CX in the context of SOE. Second, we identify, define and introduce a novel critical dimension framing CX in SOE, which is Economic patriotism-reconsidering the limited purpose of related concepts such as ethnocentrism. Finally, we define and validate a nomological framework, depicting how strategic marketing capabilities drive EXQ-PUB, leading to foster costumers' loyalty.

1. Literature background

1.1.The customer experience quality

The notion of the customer experience is not novel; it goes back to 1982 when Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) published their article titled: “The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun”. However, it still cornerstone to understand the holistic consumer journey, driving modern business strategy focused on creating emotional connections and long-term loyalty beyond mere transactional satisfaction (Almafid, 2024; Gaulé & Jovarauskiénė, 2022).

The experiential view of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) emphasizes the symbolic meaning, subconscious processes, and nonverbal cues resulting from consumption. Hence, the experience is defined as a set of personal emotions about all events experienced by a person affecting emotions, and occurring when the interaction takes place through the stimulation of goods and services consumed. More recently, Becker and Jaakkola (2020) define customer experience as “non-deliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to particular stimuli”. Rapidly, CX becomes a cornerstone concept representing a holistic understanding of the consumer journey. Commonly, CX is acknowledged as the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical interactions (Verhoef et al., 2009; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Gentile et al., 2007). It is approved as an interaction between a customer and a product, a brand, a service, a company or part of its organization (Shaw and Dallos, 2005; Walls, Okumus, Wang and Kwun, 2011). Lewis and Chambers (2000) consider the consumer experience as “*the total outcome to the customer from the combination of environment, goods and services purchased*”. The total customer experience is a consistent representation and flawless execution, across distribution

channels and interaction touchpoints, of the emotional connection and the relationship that firm wants its customers to have with its brand. Klaus and Maklan (2012) highlight the difference between the service quality and the customer experience quality. While service quality depicts the gaps between expectations and performance of a product, customer experience quality emphasizes the overall perception of the experience entirely.

The holistic nature of customer experience requires a multidimensional construct, involving the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer (Shaw and Ivens, 2002). Early, Schmitt (1999) developed a primary work including five strategic experiential modules which are: sensory experiences (**sense**); affective experiences (**feel**); creative cognitive experiences (**think**); physical experiences, behaviors and lifestyle (**act**); and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (**relate**). In the same vein, Gentile et al., (2007) upgrade the concept of CX and propose six components: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational components. According to Veroef et al., (2009), CX is evaluated through seven dimensions: Social environment, Service interface, Retail atmosphere, Assortment, Price, Customer experiences in alternative channels, and Retail brand. To measure CX quality, Lemke et al. (2010) and consider three dimensions: communication encounter, service encounter, and usage encounter. Similarly, Chang and Horng (2010) find that CX quality is explained by: physical surroundings, service providers, other customers, customers' companions, and the customers themselves. Kim et al., (2011) propose index to evaluate CX, including Environment, Benefits, Convenience, Accessibility, Utility, Incentive and Trust.

Klaus and Maklan (2012) develop CX quality scale measurement called EXQ, formative in nature and presented via hierarchical model. EXQ is four-dimensions scale which are: product experience, outcome focus, peace of mind and moment of truth. Klaus and Maklan (2012) conceptualize customer experience quality as the customer cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm relating to their purchasing behavior. It concerns all the touch-points such as marketing communication, advertising, internet presence and after-sales care. Thus, the customer experience quality is assessed as an overall perception by customer and not just as a gap to expectations.

However, the application of such private-sector models is problematic in the context of public service. SOE have a peculiar "publicness," with a core mission to serve citizen demands under

principles of equity and continuity. Meanwhile, the profile of the public service consumer has changed; they are now more exacting and critical about service quality (Mayers and Lacey, 1996; Sabadie, 2001). Against increased competition from voracious private sector entrants in once-protected markets, SOEs can no longer count on captive customers. This has triggered a migratory trend of customers from public to private providers.

Consequently, although a multi-dimensional approach towards CX is critical (Almafidi, 2024), scales like EXQ, which were designed and validated in contexts for profit, have limited and misunderstood applications for SOE. Their unique hybrid nature and balancing of commercial objectives with public service mandates require a tailored measurement instrument.

1.2. The unique context of competitive SOE

SOE operate in a unique dual reality. In fact, their focal traditional mission is to serve public interest under the instruction to prioritize principles of equity, continuity and national interest (Goudarzi et Guenoun, 2010; Sabadie, 2003). On the other hand, SOE are constrained to market liberalization leading them to compete for consumers against agile, profit-driven private firms. This study focuses on SOE in such for-profit competitive context where citizen is a discerning consumer with choices. In fact, from the consumer lenses, SOE present hybrid identity conducting to distinct context of interactions. The customer of an SOE is simultaneously a citizen steeped by his/her expectations shaped of public service values, and an empowered consumer to select among competitors. Obviously, it is widely demonstrated in prior research that consumers of public services have become more acute demanding service quality enhancement. If dissatisfied, they can and will switch to private competitor. This suggests that the key components of CX in the SOE context is likely basically different from those operating in the private setting. It is assumed to exceed functional and emotional aspects to include the symbolic value to support a national institution.

1.3. Conceptualizing the EXQ-PUP construct and its dimensions

Considering the specificities of the competitive SOE context, and basing on preliminary exploratory research, this study conceptualizes EXQ-PUB: Customer Experience Quality in Public Service as formative, second-order construct, including four dimensions. In view of theoretical reasoning, EXQ-PUB is defined as the customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect interactions with a SOE. It encompasses four dimensions which are defined as following:

- ***Economic patriotism***: the new dimension specific to SOE context. It is defined as “*the customer’s belief to consume the national good/service supported by his willingness to protect the national economy, driving, in such manner, to an ethnocentric attitude, even if it sometimes would require sacrifices going to detriment of his personal interest*”. Economic patriotism is related to consumer ethnocentrism which is defined as the general preference for domestic product. Yet, economic patriotism roots in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004) where supporting SOE translates an act of “in-group favoritism” highlighting the customer ‘s patriot and good citizen identity. Thereby, economic patriotism is more active and specific than ethnocentrism.
- ***Peace Of Mind***: adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2012), it describes the customer’s assessment of all the interactions with the service provider before, during and after the purchase of the service. It includes the assessment of reliability, transparency and fairness of all interactions with SOE. In fact, the public service sometimes is avoided by consumers, establishing trust through consistent and transparent service recovery is eminent for a positive experience.
- ***Outcome focus***: adapted from Klaus and Maklan (2012). It reflects the extent to which the customer experience fulfills a range of practical objectives related to reducing customers’ transaction cost, such as ensuring service continuity, security and access to expertise. In the SOE context, this dimension reflects the pragmatic need for the consumer which seeks for efficient outcome.
- ***Product value***: reflects the customer is pragmatic evaluation of the service’s cost-effectiveness in the context of SOE. It focuses on rational and economic calculus of value-in-use, rather than merely on affective and sensory aspects of “product experience” dimension in the existing scale EXQ. It includes the service’s price fairness reflecting monetary value, the benefits of the loyalty programs depicting loyalty benefits, and the network-driven economies representing cost-saving opportunities. Price fairness refers to the extent to which customers perceive that the service’s cost compared to its utility and their personal budget. The utility of loyalty programs depicts the perceived incentives and rewards worth which are supposed to encourage consumer to continue to be loyal. Finally, network-driven economics translates the economic benefits accumulated from participating in a shared service ecosystem with customer’s social or professional network. In the SOE context, organizations should provide appreciable monetary value to retain price-sensitive consumer.

1.4.Hypotheses development: Antecedent and consequences of EXQ-PUB

In order to establish the nomological validity of EXQ-PUB, a network of theoretical relationships positioning specialized marketing capabilities (SMC) as key antecedent and customer loyalty (behavioral and attitudinal) as consequences.

According to the service-dominant logic, a firm provides value proposition through its capabilities which, according to resources-based view, they are considered as key to achieve competitive advantage. SMC are represented by product development, pricing, promotion relationship building and distribution. They constitute a critical factor to deliver a high value proposition reinforcing the creation of greater offers and better interactions between SOE and their consumers which resonate as consumers and citizens (Mariadoss et al., 2011). Thereby, we posit:

H1: The SMC positively influence EXQ-PUB.

The primary objective of delivering a superior experience is to achieve the customer loyalty (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Kim and Choi, 2013; Foroudi et al., 2016; Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2012, Eskiler and Safak, 2022). Actually, loyalty is a multi-dimensional construct including both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty components. Attitudinal loyalty refers to customer's psychological attachment, advocacy and intention to recommend. Behavioral loyalty reflects the repeat purchase behavior and resistance to switch.

A CX, as measured by EXQ-PUB, is supposed to drive both loyalty components in SOE context. In fact, a high CX expressed into economic patriotism, peace of mind, outcome focus and product value aims to build a long-term relationship, fostering positive affective loyalty toward the SOE, and behavioral loyalty by avoiding incentives to look for substitutes (Srivastava and Kaul, 2016).

H2: EXQ-PUB positively influence attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

The value proposition delivered through the SMC remains abstract and intangible until it is assessed by the customer according to his/her interactions with the firm and his/her experience in general. Thereby, the SMC yield customer loyalty through a positive CX. Accordingly, the EXQ-PUB is posited to mediate the relationship between SMC and consumer loyalty.

H3: EXQ-PUB mediates the relationship between SMC and (a) attitudinal loyalty and (b) behavioral loyalty.

II. Methodology

2.1. Overall Research Design

A sequential mixed-methods design is employed, in consistency with established scale development procedure (Rossiter, 2002; Klaus and Maklan, 2012)

Stage 1: Item generation and content validity

This study explores how customers evaluate their experience quality in the public service context and to identify dimensions affecting and influencing this evaluation. The means-end approach (Valette-Florence, 1994) and soft laddering (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2006; Reynolds and Gutman, 1988) were employed to capture customers' cognitive interpretations and to access to their reasoning driving their behaviors. As customer experience quality is conceptualized as formative construct (Klaus and Maklan, 2013), we run into C-OAR-SE procedure (Rossiter, 2002) as recommended by Crié (2005) in order to ensure construct validity. We conduct twelve (12) interviews with consumers of Tunisie Telecom, a Tunisian telecommunication provider- a quintessential SEO in a competitive market, until theoretical saturation was attained. Following a thematic content analysis (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2005) using NVivo 11.0, an initial pool of 48 items was generated. With the abductive reasoning, the confrontation of the findings with the literature led to the conceptualization of a novel dimension: economic patriotism-emerged depicting the customer's willingness to support SOE. Combined with four dimensions adapted from the scale measure EXQ developed and validated by (Klaus and Maklan, 2012), which are: Peace of mind, Outcome focus, Product experience and Moment of truth, a preliminarily EXQ-PUB model is conceptualized.

To refine items and assess content validity, a Q-Sort technique (Diamantopolous and Wikenholfer, 2001) with academic and professional expert judges was used. The expert judges are asked to evaluate clarity, conciseness and representativeness of items on a seven-point scale. It required two Q-Sort rounds. Inter-judge agreement score ($Ir=0.83$) and placement items ratio (hit-ratios=0.8) indicated satisfactory reliability (Perreault and Leigh, 1989; Moore and Benbasat, 1991). The process achieves with 39 items and 5 dimensions.

Following Diamantopoulos et al. (2008), **indicator and nomological validity** were assessed by linking EXQ-PUB- the formative construct, to reflective antecedents (SMC) and consequences (attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty) (Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner and Kuntze, 1999). This framework drove the subsequent empirical testing.

2.2.Results

Stage 3: Data Collection and Scale Purification

To validate the conceptual model, a process with two steps was required.

The first step stresses on the statistical purification of EXQ-PUB and its factor analysis.

Therefore, a first data collection has been conducted with 148 Tunisie Telecom users. After excluding incomplete responses, 128 of responses were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. A five-point Likert scale is used for all items of EXQ-PUB (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the EFA Sample (N=128)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	47	36.7%
	Female	81	63.3%
Age	18-25	28	21.9%
	26-35	41	32.0%
	36-45	35	27.3%
	46-55	10	7.8%
	56 and over	14	10.9%
Education Level	Primary School	3	2.3%
	High School or less	18	14.1%
	Bachelor's / Master's	55	43.0%
	Postgraduate	52	40.6%
Occupation	Farmer	2	1.6%
	Business Owner	4	3.1%
	Professional / Senior Manager	53	41.4%
	Mid-Level Manager	33	25.8%
	Employee	20	15.6%
	Worker	2	1.6%
	Student	14	10.9%

Stage 4: Scale and conceptual model validation

We perform an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The data is suitable for EFA (KMO=0.914; Bartlett's tests of sphericity, $p < 0.001$).

The initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted on the item pool representing the five preliminary dimensions. The eigenvalue criterion (>1) and the scree plot test suggested a six-factor structure (Cattell, 1966), which initially explained 69.64% of the total variance. However, during the subsequent purification process after Varimax rotation, items with low communalities (<0.50), cross-loadings, or inconsistent theoretical alignment were eliminated. It became clear that the initial six-factor solution was an artifact, primarily caused by the problematic 'Moment of Truth' items, which exhibited high cross-loadings with the 'Peace of Mind' dimension. Theoretically, the concepts of fair treatment and effective problem resolution—central to 'Moment of Truth'—were absorbed by the broader 'Peace of Mind' dimension, which encompasses the assessment of all interactions, including service recovery. Consequently, the 'Moment of Truth' dimension was dropped. This purification process initially yielded a five-factor solution with 25 items. A reliability analysis then underscored satisfactory internal consistency for most dimensions (Cronbach's α ranging from 0.792 to 0.942), except for 'Product Experience' ($\alpha=0.606$), which was subsequently excluded. The final, stable, and theoretically coherent scale thus contains 20 items across four dimensions: *Economic Patriotism*, *Peace of Mind*, *Outcome Focus*, and *Product Value*.

Stage 5: Scale Validation and hypothesis testing

After refinement of EXQ-PUB, a second data collection was conducted with 169 Tunisie Telecom customers in order to validate the scale and to test hypothesized model.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Validation Sample (N=169)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	75	44.4%
	Female	94	55.6%
Age	18-25	32	18.9%
	26-35	56	33.1%
	36-45	44	26.0%
	46-55	19	11.2%
	56 and over	18	10.7%
Education Level	Primary School	3	1.8%

	High School or less	26	15.4%
	Bachelor's / Master's	78	46.2%
	Postgraduate	62	36.7%
Occupation	Farmer	2	1.2%
	Business Owner	6	3.6%
	Professional / Senior Manager	64	37.9%
	Mid-Level Manager	40	23.7%
	Employee	26	15.4%
	Worker	3	1.8%
	Student	17	10.1%
	Other / Not Specified	11	6.5%

All measurement instruments were drawn from prior research. For specialized marketing capabilities, we adopted the reflective scale measure from Mariadoss et al. (2011) itself inspired by Vorhies et al. (1999). The scale measures the capabilities in pricing, promotion, product development, channel linking, and relationship building. For the customer loyalty, we use a reflective scale adopted from Chitty et al. (2007) and Donnelly (2009) encompassing both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. All constructs use a 5-point Likert scale (*1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 4: Agree 5: Strongly agree*).

Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling is employed using SmartPLS. This approach is appropriate for these three primary reasons:

- The model combines formative (EXQ-PUB) and reflective (SMC and Loyalty) constructs, for which PLS is particularly suitable (Hair et al., 2019).
- The research aims extending the theory development and prediction (Henseler et al., 2009).
- PLS appropriate for models involving non-normal data and effective with smaller sample sizes (Hair et al., 2011)

2.3.Findings

Validation of the measurement model

Convergent and discriminant validity were tested following Hair et al. (2011). In all constructs, reflective construct showed strong psychometric properties-factor loading exceeded 0.7 ($p < 0.001$) for all items except one “Distribution Channel Capabilities” which has a factor-

loading of 0.679, thus it was removed. Composite reliability ranges from 0.863 to 0.957, while Cronbach's α values range from 0.789 to 0.945. The average variance extracted shows values exceeded 0.50, ranging from 0.613 to 0.917, thus supporting convergent validity. Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis confirmed discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Chin, 1998).

Table 3: Psychometric properties of the reflective constructs

Construct	Items	Factor loading	T-statistic	P Value	A	CR	AVE
ECOPATRI	PATRSM	0.902	56.914	0.000	0.945	0.956	0.785
	CZTSHIP	0.847	30.702	0.000			
	ETHNOC1	0.912	59.034	0.000			
	NATECONY	0.904	56.645	0.000			
	RELIBTY	0.893	41.670	0.000			
	TRUSTWNSS	0.854	33.105	0.000			
OUTFOC	EXPTIS	0.865	48.331	0.000	0.836	0.889	0.668
	CONTINUITY	0.838	28.944	0.000			
	PHYSURROUND	0.795	20.472	0.000			
	SECURITY	0.768	17.140	0.000			
POM	OUTQUAL	0.750	17.136	0.000	0.875	0.906	0.615
	PCSSTIME	0.782	17.179	0.000			
	SEVRECOV	0.802	25.919	0.000			
	TRANSCY	0.801	19.155	0.000			
	FAMLTY	0.811	28.727	0.000			
	GOODWILL	0.759	14.989	0.000			
PDTV _{al}	PRICE	0.711	12.911	0.000	0.789	0.863	0.613
	PGMLOYAL	0.836	29.211	0.000			
	ENTOUGCONF	0.791	20.822	0.000			
	ENTOUGINFL	0.789	20.436	0.000			
SMC	CAPDISCHAN	0.679	9.927	0.000	0.850	0.899	0.690
	CAPDTDVPMT	0.823	24.582	0.000			
	CAPPROM	0.883	42.126	0.000			
	CAPRICE	0.781	20.488	0.000			

	CPBUILRLSHP	0.833	27.007	0.000			
BEHLOYAL	REPURINT	0.941	67.216	0.000	0.862	0.935	0.879
	LOYALTY	0.934	58.277	0.000			
ATTLOYAL	RECOMM	0.958	136.750	0.000	0.910	0.957	0.917
	WOF	0.958	138.535	0.000			

Table 4: The correlations matrix of EXQ-PUB first-order constructs

	EXQ-				
	ECOPATRI	PUB	OUTFOC	POM	PDTV_{al}
ECOPATRI	1.000	0.877	0.555	0.640	0.556
EXQ-PUB	0.877	1.000	0.744	0.859	0.737
OUTFOC	0.555	0.744	1.000	0.645	0.492
POM	0.640	0.859	0.645	1.000	0.631
PDTV_{al}	0.556	0.737	0.492	0.631	1.000

For the formative constructs, the weight of each construct, the multicollinearity (VIF), and the path coefficients were assessed. The validity criteria were verified through the variance inflation factors ($VIF < 3$) which ranged from 1.928 to 2.575. Although the *Product Value* dimension had a marginally low weight (0.184), it was retained due to its strong conceptual relevance and significant correlation with EXQ-PUB ($r = 0.737$), consistent with Bollen & Lennox (1991) and Henseler et al. (2009).

The correlations between the first-order constructs to the second-order construct are high (from 0.737 to 0.877) which means that the construct is a second-order construct confirming the hierarchical structure and the discriminant validity.

The values of R^2 are ranging from 0.703 to 0.984 supporting the model's substantial explanatory power. For the nomological validity, the three conditions of the nomological validity are confirmed. The results show significant relationships between the EXQ-PUB and the behavioral loyalty, and the EXQ-PUB and the attitudinal loyalty corresponding to $\beta = 0.833$, $t = 35.948$, $p = 0.000$, and to $\beta = 0.865$, $t = 44.711$, $p = 0.000$, respectively, and EXQ-PUB and the SMC: $\beta = 0.152$, $t = 4.351$, $p = 0.000$. These results validate the four formative dimensions — *Economic Patriotism*, *Peace of Mind*, *Outcome Focus*, and *Product Value* — as key drivers of customer experience quality in SOE.

According to Lacroux (2009) and Henseler et al. (2009), the validation of the hypotheses depends on the significance (t-value) and the importance of the obtained structural relations (path coefficient). The following table displays a summary of hypothesis tests results.

The mediation analysis confirmed partial complementary mediation of EXQ-PUB between SMC and both loyalty components, supporting all hypotheses (H1–H3).

Further specific indirect effects analysis shows how the customer experience quality construct, EXQ-PUB, as a second-order formative model, consisting of Economic Patriotism, Outcome Focus, Peace of Mind, and Product Value, mediates the relationship between different antecedents and Customer Loyalty.

The results reveal that economic patriotism, outcome focus, and moment of truth all have statistically significant and positive indirect effects on Customer Loyalty via EXQ-PUB: respectively, $\beta = 0.601$, $p < 0.001$, $\beta = 0.158$, $p < 0.001$, and $\beta = 0.116$, $p < 0.001$. That means these dimensions are core drivers whose impact on loyalty is essentially channelled through the improvement of overall perceived experience quality.

By contrast, the indirect route via EXQ-PUB from Product Value to loyalty is not significant at $\beta = -0.014$ ($p = 0.503$), indicating that this dimension does not contribute to loyalty through the overall experience construct in this model. This finding demonstrates that the customer's pragmatic assessment of the service's cost-effectiveness, in terms of price equity, loyalty program rewards, and network-based economies, does not lead to increased loyalty through improved CX. In the context of SOE, it suggests that while rational and economic calculation is considered as a component of the experience construct, its impact differs from the key drivers of the experience construct-such as Economic Patriotism or Outcome Focus-which explicitly create loyalty through the perceived quality of the overall customer experience. As a result, Product Value operates independently or as a "table stake" whose effect on loyalty is not well conveyed through the holistic EXQ-PUB construct.

Again, while the indirect effect of SMC on loyalty via EXQ-PUB is statistically significant, with a β -value of 0.128 ($p < 0.001$), its magnitude is much smaller compared to the core experience dimensions, indicating a relatively minor mediated pathway.

This suggests that the firm's specific marketing competencies, including sophisticated market analysis, selective communication, and brand management, cannot affect customer loyalty

themselves but at least partly influence it through a perceptual filter of customer experience. In other words, for effective marketing capabilities to work, they have to improve first the customer's overall perception of the quality of the service, shaped by core dimensions such as Economic Patriotism and Outcome Focus, and, second, these improved perceptions of quality will then help foster a closer and more loyal customer relationship.

Table 5: The direct and indirect relations of the latent variables

	HYPOTHESES	PATH COEFFICIENT	T STATISTICS	P VALUES	RESULT
H1	SMC --> EXQ-PUB	0.165	4.098	0.000	SUPPORTED
H2a	EXQ-PUB --> ATTLOYAL	0.770	13.882	0.000	SUPPORTED
H2b	EXQ-PUB --> BEHLOYAL	0.815	13.814	0.000	SUPPORTED
H3	SMC -> EXQ-PUB -> CUSTOMER LOYALTY	0.128	1.337	0.000	SUPPORTED

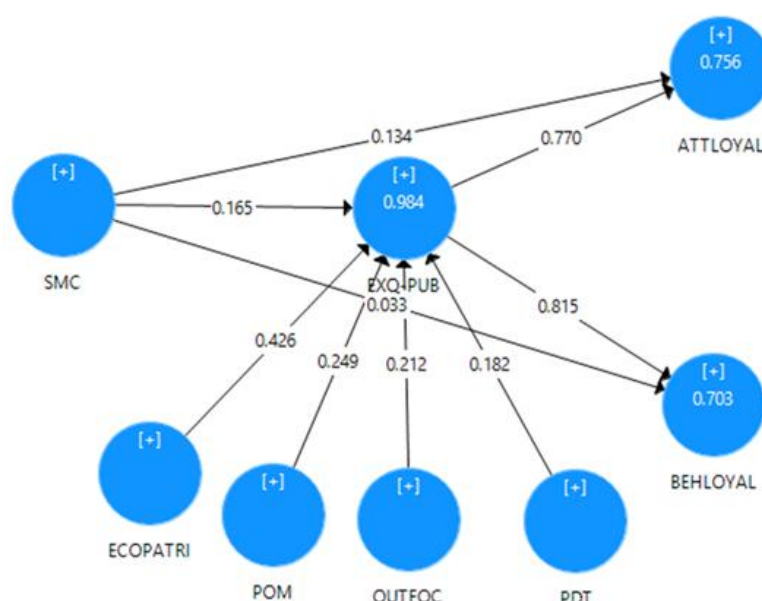


Fig1. Validation of the conceptual model

Discussion and implications

This study aims to develop and validate a scale to measure customer experience quality in competitive SOE. Findings confirm that CX in such hybrid context is indeed a multi-dimensional, formative second-order construct, shaped with four dimensions: Economic

Patriotism, Peace of Mind, Outcome Focus, and Product Value, and explained with and 20 items.

The most fundamental finding is the identification and validation of Economic Patriotism as the most powerful dimension of EXQ-PUB. Given salient outcome, theoretical boundaries of CX widely limited to emotional, functional and sensorial dimensions (Schmitt, 1999; Gentile et al., 2007, Lemke et al., 2010; Kim, Cha, Knuston and Beck, 2011; Chang and Horng, 2010; Klaus and Maklan, 2012) are extended. Earlier studies have examined related concepts such as ethnocentrism. However, economic patriotism translates a deeper and more proactive willingness to support a national institution, even potential personal cost is compromised. According to this dimension, customers of SOE consider the consumption experience is beyond merely transaction but an expression of social identity and national solidarity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Moreover, finding of this study reaffirms the relevance of established CX dimensions within the context of SOE. In line with Klaus and Maklan (2012), the prominence of peace of mind and outcome focus show reliability, transparency and goal achievement are universal foundations of a high-quality experience. Yet, within SOE, these factors gain additional importance yielded by the public service ethos that privilege trust and continuity. Similarly, the evolution of “Product Experience” into Product Value sheds the light on the strengthen price sensitivity and pragmatic evaluation that competitive markets endorse, demonstrating the reason for what SOE can no longer rely on monopoly status (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Actually, a particularly insightful finding is the non-significant indirect effect of Product Value on loyalty through the overall EXQ-PUB construct ($\beta = -0.014$, $p = 0.503$). This suggests that in the SOE context, a customer's pragmatic assessment of cost-effectiveness—encompassing price fairness, loyalty programs, and network economies—functions as a 'table stake' or hygiene factor rather than a key driver of experiential loyalty. While customers certainly evaluate and expect competitive Product Value, its impact on loyalty is not mediated by the holistic perception of experience quality. In contrast, dimensions like Economic Patriotism and Outcome Focus are core drivers that actively build loyalty through the enhanced experience. This implies that for SOEs, competitive advantage is not won on price and promotions alone, but on a deeper, purpose-driven connection. Managers must ensure Product Value is competitive to enter the market, but cannot rely on it to foster the deep, experiential loyalty that symbolic and relational dimensions provide.

The validated nomological framework offers robust theoretical and managerial insights. Reinforcing the resource-based view, the significant influence of SMC on EXQ-PUB illustrates that even SOE must excel core market-oriented activities in order to effectively shape the customer experience (Vorhies et al., 1999). On the other hand, findings underscore that EXQ-PUB is a strong mediator driving attitudinal and behavioral loyalty confirms that the road to gain enduring customer loyalty within SOE arises from a holistically satisfying experience which balances out economic value with national identity.

Theoretical implications

The main theoretical contributions of this research are as follows. First, EXQ-PUB represents the first-ever validated scale to conceptualize and measure the quality of customer experience in competitive SOEs; thus, it bridges an important gap in the literature. Second, Economic Patriotism is proposed as a new construct that extends CX theory by incorporating socio-political identity into the model of consumer evaluation. Finally, this study demonstrates that established private-sector CX frameworks need contextual adaptation in order to fully capture the dynamics of hybrid organizations that straddle public service and commercial competition.

Managerial implications

The EXQ-PUB scale thus serves as a strategic diagnostic for managers of SOE. In fact, the dimensions provide a clear framework whereby investments and strategy can be prioritized.

Leverage Economic Patriotism. The managers of SOE should consequently consider this dimension in their branding and communication activities. Marketing campaigns will be able to underscore how an SOE contributes to national development, job creation, and cultural identity. What turned out to be possibly a liability-the state ownership-becomes a distinctive competitive asset that private rivals cannot match.

Balance the CX Portfolio. Managers should not depend entirely on national sentiment. Our model underlines the importance of **core** marketing capabilities in igniting patriotic loyalty. For this reason, managers should balance improvement efforts between Product Value through competitive pricing and loyalty programs, and Peace of Mind through reliable service and transparent processes to hold on to the most patriotic but pragmatically-oriented customers.

A Strategic Checklist: EXQ-PUB provides an actionable checklist for managers.

- Product Value refers to the level of which the pricing strategy and loyalty program provide economic value that meets the customers' expectations.

- Outcome Focus indicates if SOE are enabling customers to achieve their goals efficiently, such as through seamless service continuity and accessible expertise.
- Peace of Mind translates if SOE's service recovery processes and operational transparency build trust and reduce customer effort.
- Economic Patriotism shows how SOE is authentically communicating their national role in ways that strengthen their brand's emotional connection based on shared identity.

Limitations and Future Research

These limitations point to some fruitful avenues for further research. The EXQ-PUB scale was validated in one country and one industry. The next studies should test its applicability in other SOE sectors, such as banking, aviation, and energy, in order to evaluate their generalizability. Also, the salience of Economic Patriotism is likely influenced by various cultural, historical, and institutional factors. A cross-cultural comparative study-for example, between a developing nation with a strong national identity and a more economically developed context-may unravel how the weight of this dimension varies. Furthermore, future research should investigate potential moderators, such as a consumer's political ideology or their general level of trust in government, to better understand the conditions under which this dimension most strongly influences customer experience and loyalty. The resultant study will make an important contribution to our understanding of the interplay of nationalism, consumer behavior, and customer experience in the global economy.

Appendices

Appendix 2: *EXQ-PUB scale measurement*

<u>Economic patriotism</u>	
Citizenship	34. When I consume X, I feel that I'm a good citizen.
Patriotism	35. I stay with X by patriotism.
Ethnocentrism	36. I prefer to consume X over the other operators because it's a public service.
National Economy	37. I prefer to consume X to the detriment of the other operators to provide benefit to my country.
Reliability	31. I may rely on X since it's a public company.
Trustworthiness	28. X is trustworthy over other provider since it's a public company.
<u>Outcome focus</u>	
Continuity	21. X, as public company, ensures continued service.
Expertise	29. I feel confident in X's expertise.
Physical surroundings	26. X agencies are organized.
Security	20. X is a reputable company.
<u>Peace of mind</u>	
Familiarity	23. I have dealt with XYZ before so getting what I needed was really easy.
Goodwill	15. The people at X gives customer individual attention.
Outcome quality	13. X delivers a superior service quality.
Process time	33. The services' process time at X is swift.
Service recovery	14. X deals with me correctly when things go wrong.
Transparency	27. X is transparent.
<u>Product expense</u>	
Price	7. The prices proposed by X suit my budget.
Loyalty program	10. The loyalty programs of X grant/allow me to consume freebies.
Entourage conformity	38. Using X like my entourage lets me save money.
Entourage influence	39. It is important to me that my entourage use X to let me save money.

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