

**Brand Resonance Through Employees'
Intrinsic Touch Point Engagement**

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ABSTRACT

Brand Resonance Through Employees’ Intrinsic Touch Point Engagement

Purpose and objectives of the paper

Any stakeholder’s perception about an organisational brand identity is built during every interaction along the touch points of an organization (Hogan et al. 2005; Esch et al., 2014; Botschen et al., 2017). One of the most crucial challenges for brand leadership and brand management is to ensure that their organisational touch point interfaces stimulate the co-creation of the intended meaning-portfolio (Filho, 2012 and 2015; Botschen and Muehlbacher 2019) to create enduring brand resonance (Keller, 2003).

To build enduring resonating customer experiences, the authors develop a framework for intrinsic touchpoint engagement and design of brand resonance together with a corresponding discourse stimulating software tool, called TPD – the Touch-Point Designer. TPD motivates employees observing, reflecting and redesigning their dedicated set of touch points. This way TPD activates employees’ intrinsic touch point engagement and organisational commitment while at the same time strengthening customer satisfaction and improving organisational brand’s resonance.

Originality – what is new about it?

To the authors’ knowledge this is the first contribution which provides a framework linking continuous touch point design to intrinsic work engagement and customer resonance. Together with the conceptual framework the authors present the design and development of a software tool, called Touch Point Designer (TPD) integrates the core elements of the described framework. The development of the TPD tool is based on the design science research approach of Simon (1996) and Hevner et al. (2004). Finally, the application of the TPD tool is prototypically demonstrated in an action research setting with a food retailer.

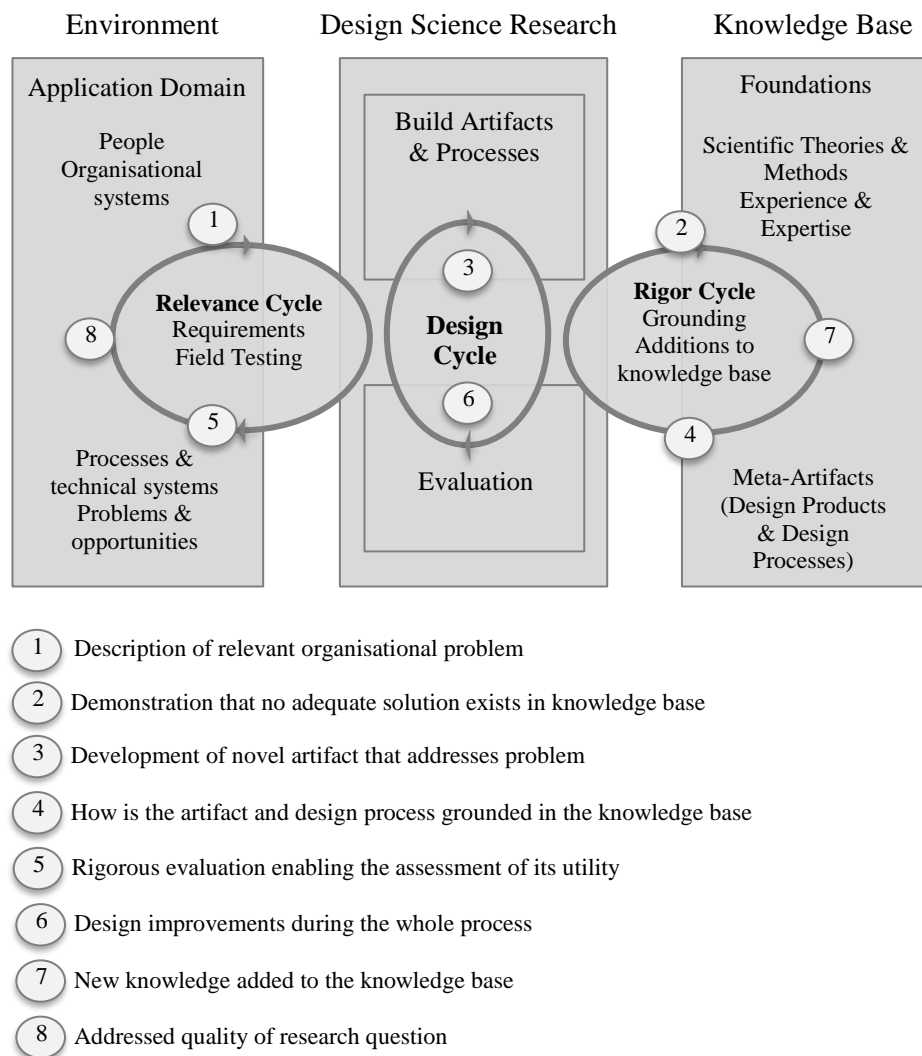
Research methodology

After the introductory clarification of the particular understanding of touch point design, intrinsic work engagement and resulting enduring customer resonance the framework for “Intrinsic Touch-Point Engagement and Design of Brand Resonance” is developed.

The development of the framework and the corresponding software-tool TPD is based of the design science research approach of Hevner et al. (2004). Design science, as originally conceptualized by Simon (1996), supports a pragmatic research paradigm that calls for the creation of innovative artifacts to solve real-world problems. Thus, design science research combines a focus on the artifact with a high priority on relevance in the application domain.

The authors apply the design science research approach to the development of the artifact “Intrinsic Touch-point Engagement & Design”. The design science research approach for the evolution of the artifact follow the guidelines described in Figure 1. They are a condensed version of the guidelines and questions discussed in contributions by Hevner et al. (2004), March and Storey (2008) and Hevner and Chatterjee (2010).

Figure 1: Design Science Research Cycle & Guidelines



The “Relevance Cycle” bridges the contextual environment of the research project with the design science activities. The “Rigor Cycle” connects the design science activities with the knowledge base of scientific foundations that underlie the research project. The “Design Cycle” iterates between the core activities of building and evaluating artifacts and processes of the research.

The internal design cycle describes the nature as generating design alternatives and evaluating them against requirements until a satisfactory design is achieved. The requirements are the input from the relevance cycle and the design and evaluation theories and methods are drawn from the rigor cycle. All constructing and evaluating activities of the evolving artifact must be based on relevance and rigor.

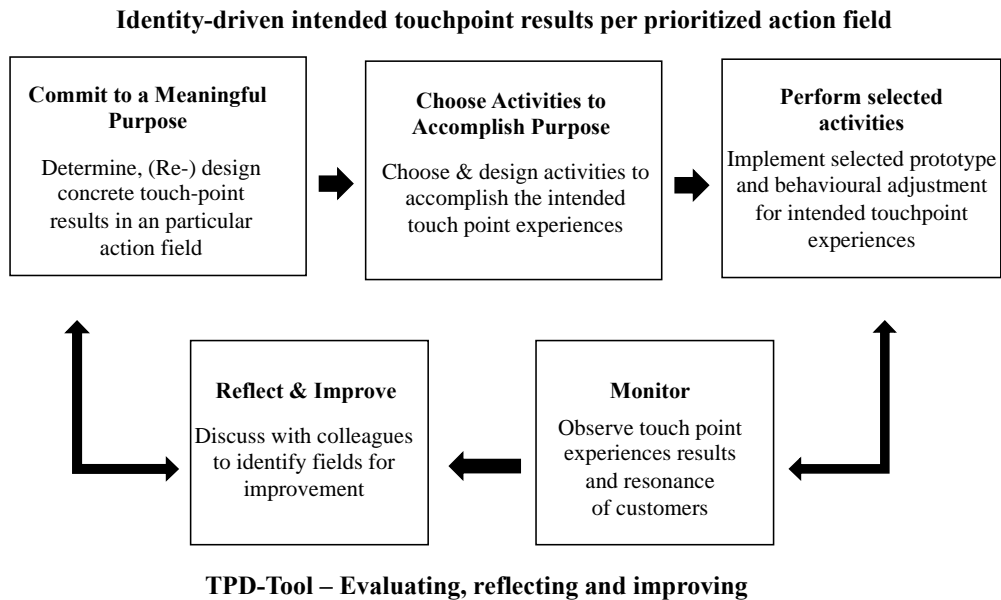
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Findings and discussion

The development of the framework and the corresponding software-tool TPD is based on The “Interpretive” Model of intrinsic task motivation of Kenneth and Velthouse (1990), the work engagement profile of Thomas and Tymon (1994), Keller’s (2003) understanding of brand resonance together with Brakus et. al (2009) specification of brand experience.

The framework consists of five main stages. The first three describe the determination and implementation of touch point experiences of a particular action field which are derived from the intended organisational identity. During the “Commit to a meaningful purpose” phase employees of a particular action field, e.g. the fruit and vegetable section of a supermarket, are asked to discuss and reflect intended touch point experiences, which ought to materialise the intended identity of the organisation. During the “Choose activities to accomplish purpose” phase the responsible team selects and designs activities to achieve the intended experiences, e.g. increasing the variety of organic and local food, improving the perceived freshness and aroma of fruits and vegetables, creating a nicely nurtured presentation and appearance of the entire assortment of the section. In phase three the selected activities and behaviours are performed. To maintain the adequate performance level affected employees might need to be trained, new employees can be recruited, new suppliers need to be identified and integrated into the chain of logistics, the presentation will be changed, the multisensory side of products is carefully checked etc.

Figure 2:
Framework for Intrinsic Touchpoint Engagement and Design of Brand Resonance



The following two phases are supported by the Touch Point Designer Tool. In phase four TPD allows employees to observe the results of the intended touchpoint experience and to evaluate the degree of resonance of the involved customers. This analysis becomes reflected with the analyses of other colleagues in this section. Based on these interactions activities for further improvements are proposed and discussed under the light of intended touch point

experiences. The most promising ones become selected and implemented again. The circle of improvements continues. Affected employees become intrinsically motivated and engaged (Kenneth and Velthouse, 1990; Thomas and Tymon, 2010) and turn into a kind of “entrepreneurs” of the particular action field respectively assortment category, e.g. fruit and vegetable section in our example. Involved employees do not only fulfil their roles as responsible performers of delegated activities, they much more become co-creators of intended touch point experiences (Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Luu, Rowley and Dinh, 2018).

Theoretical and practical implications

The conceptual framework and derived TPD Tool seem to provide a promising mechanism to activate the intrinsic motivation and engagement towards ongoing improvements of leveraging touch-point zones. The TPD based empowering of employees to observe, explore, (re-) design and consequently implementing intended touch-point experiences emphasises employees’ role as co-creators and impacts on continuous developing and strengthening organisational brand’s resonance.

Limitations and Future Research

The described conceptual framework and supporting TPD tool are still at the level of a work in progress which need to be tested in a real business context. Potential collaborating partners would be a (food-) retailers where the framework could be applied in one or two branches and compared over a time span of at least six months with the results of standard shops of the chain. On a long-term perspective, the framework should be tested across different retail and service industries, eventually across countries, e.g. Austria and Italy. So far, this seems to be the first framework which links a co-creating intrinsic engagement of employees to continuous improved touch point experiences, this way strengthening the entire organisational brand.

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