**Moving the Customer Experience Field Forward: Introducing the Touchpoints, Context, Qualities (TCQ) Nomenclature**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

CX programs, still considered the #1 strategic priority of many CEO’s worldwide, have suffered multiple setbacks recently. Only 1 in 3 CX programs is said to be successful. In response, there is an increasing worry among CX managers that CX will suffer a similar (potentially fatal) fate as other past marketing-led efforts, such as CRM, as being seen by CEOs as a costly endeavor not worth continuing. In other words, it’s time for CX to put up, or shut up! A new study in the *Journal of Service Research* by Arne De Keyser (EDHEC Business School, France), Katrien Verleye (Ghent University, Belgium), Katherine Lemon (Boston College, USA), Timothy Keiningham (St. John’s University) and Phil Klaus (International University of Monaco) seeks to boost the impact of CX practice.

“Part of the problem is that many people are giving lip service to CX, but don’t really understand its complexity,” says Arne De Keyser, assistant professor of marketing at EDHEC Business School. “We develop a common language – or TCQ nomenclature as we call it – that captures all relevant aspects of CX. This should bring clarity to the CX field by clearly outlining what is CX and what it is not. If all parties around the table have a similar understanding of CX and use a shared vocabulary, developing impactful CX practices should become the norm.’

The TCQ nomenclature puts forth the key building blocks and components of CX that any professional with a genuine interest in CX should be talking about. ‘T’ stands for touchpoints where customer and firm interact, differing in control (firm-controlled, non-firm-controlled), nature (human, physical, digital), and stage (pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase). ‘C’ stands for context and represents the broader situation in which any touchpoint is embedded and has a great impact on how that touchpoint is experienced. Contextual factors are situated on four distinct levels: individual (e.g., one’s mood), social (e.g., one’s family and friends), market (e.g., competitor firms) and environmental (e.g., weather or political climate). ‘Q’ stands for qualities and reflects the very nature of one’s experience. Experiences vary in terms of participation level (is the experience active or passive?), dimensionality (is the experience emotional? cognitively challenging? sensory stimulating?), timeflow (short or long? dynamic?), valence (positive or negative?), and ordinariness (is the experience intense? uncommon? surprising?).

“In combination, the TCQ components allow managers to approach CX in a more structured fashion. Specifically, TCQ enables any type of organization – private, social-profit or public - to easily audit their existing customer journeys, as well as enabling them to embolden CX innovation using a TCQ lens,” says Katrien Verleye, assistant professor of service innovation (Ghent University, Belgium). “Any organization should be understanding the totality of touchpoints customers have with their offerings including those not controlled by the organization and how they contribute to CX, what CX qualities they’re delivering and whether they match with what the customer is looking for, and what contextual influences matter most and how these may be incorporated for differentiation and improving the CX. It is only by overseeing the totality of CX components and thinking about ideal T, C and Q combinations, that firms may start seeing real payoffs in terms of CX,” mentions Kay Lemon, Accenture professor of marketing (Boston College). “TCQ offers a great starting point to manage CX, but a culture of CX excellence and the consideration of CX as a core organizational capability crossing functional departments are still necessary to make TCQ-driven improvements successful,” concludes Arne De Keyser.