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A tangible method for exploring children's CX in value networks

Litovuo Lauri

Purpose – Customer experiences (cx), particularly in healthcare, are challenging for researchers to study because of the myriad touchpoints spanning long customer journeys and the complexity of value networks. Exploring and inquiring experiences are even more challenging with children, because of the low cognitive competence of children and their tendency to focus more present matters in experience inquiries. The purpose of this paper is to introduce a novel, participatory designed, data collection method for cx research, which includes tangible elements to prompt children's storytelling and which integrates customer journey and value network approach.

Design/methodology/approach – The method development followed a design science research approach. A previously conducted mapping of Finnish healthcare value network and a literature review on children's customer experience, healthcare value networks and tangible research methods provided the research challenge and theoretical support for the development of the method. Method development and design was conducted in participatory design sessions with children.

Findings – Participatory designed method consists of two categories of tangible elements: a pathway puzzle and figurines. Wooden pathway puzzle represents customer journey; a piece of the puzzle depicting an important touchpoint of the journey. Puzzle enables children to build their own customer journey and supports the experience inquiry. The wooden figurines represent different actors of the healthcare system and patient networks. Figurines support deeper understanding of the experience creation in the complex network context.

Research implications – The method provides researchers with a method that advances service design and research with children at the exploration stage of the service design process. The method makes possible a rich understanding of children's cx over their customer journeys in a network environment. The method unveils the interactions that children have with different value network actors at different touchpoints of the journey.

Originality/value – The literature presents several recent papers discussing the need to move from dyadic interactions to address value networks in customer experience research. Some papers present service design methods and tools that enables the shift. This paper continues that existing work and contributes by presenting a novel method for cx research and reports an example application for exploring children's cx in healthcare value network.

Key words research method, customer experience, value networks, healthcare, participatory design

Paper type –research paper