

## ONGOING HEALTHCARE CUSTOMER JOURNEYS: TREATMENT CHOICES, TENSIONS AND TRADE-OFFS

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**Purpose** – Customer experience is not only a research priority (Ostrom et al. 2015), it is listed in the top ten priorities of CEOs around the globe as meaningful customer experience is viewed as essential to achieving competitive advantage and satisfied customers (Rawson et al. 2013). However, taking a firm centric perspective has produced limited models of customer journeys (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2018; Nakata et al. 2018). Customer journeys have been conceptualized as comprising three phases – pre purchase, purchase and post purchase (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), yet little is known about customer journeys from the focal customer's own world perspective. This is especially true for ongoing customer journeys. We address this shortcoming by taking an ecosystem perspective (Frow, McColl-Kennedy and Payne 2016) that focuses on value cocreation investigating healthcare customers' ongoing activities and interactions with members of their service ecosystems (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012; 2017).

**Design/Methodology/approach** – Chronic disease is an important context to investigate ongoing customer journeys. The chronic disease Cystic fibrosis (CF), a life-threatening disease, requires significant time-consuming and complex treatments across the lifespan (Cohen-Cymerknoh, Shoseyov and Kerem 2011). As such, it affords an excellent setting to explore ongoing customer journeys. The purpose of this study is threefold, to: (1) understand in depth the treatment choices, tensions and trade-offs that healthcare customers make throughout their activities and interactions with others in their service ecosystem, identifying the relative influence of the various ecosystem members; (2) develop a novel conceptual framework of ongoing customer journeys; and (3) highlight implications for practice.

Healthcare customers with chronic diseases interact not only with clinicians in hospitals and clinics but also with family and friends to cocreate value across their journeys (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012; 2017). While prior work has established that some activities require considerable effort (Sweeney, Danaher and McColl-Kennedy 2015) and difficult choices, where trade-offs are required, no study has focused on the tensions and trade-offs in treatment choices from a customer's own world ecosystem perspective. This is where we contribute.

**Findings** – We make an important contribution to both theory and practice by developing and illustrating our novel Conceptual Framework of Ongoing Customer Journeys highlighting tensions and trade-offs around: (1) compliance, adherence and concordance (from the clinician perspective) designed to assist in physical well-being and health outcomes aimed at extending life; and (2) a focus on happiness, living life to the fullest, pursuing a passion (from the family member perspective) to assist existential and social well-being. Our conceptual framework maps key tensions and trade-offs to outcomes. We conclude with implications for practice and a research agenda.

**Originality/value** – This is a first study in a critically important context – healthcare, demonstrating the usefulness of our novel conceptual framework of ongoing customer journeys, mapping key tensions and tradeoffs to outcomes designed to improve patient experiences.

**Key words** - customer journeys, customer experience, ecosystems, trade-offs/tensions, customer choices

**Paper type** – Empirical research paper

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