RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The Success of Customer-Centric Companies in the Global Context on the Road to Industry 5.0

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Abstract: In a globalized world, where the incorporation of emerging technologies is common as part of digital acceleration processes, organizations are forced to rethink their approaches and business models to survive and generate a competitive advantage in the transition to Industry 5.0. The objective of this research was to identify the factors that generate a positive impact on a customer-centric strategy within the business sector in the global context, providing a route to the new industrial revolution. The study adopted a qualitative and exploratory approach, analyzing three case studies of companies that succeeded in their business strategy by shifting their focus to a customer-centric strategy. These cases made it possible to explain the phenomenon under investigation in detail. The analysis revealed that all the companies made significant changes in their areas of innovation and corporate culture, which made it possible to maximize the benefits expected by the customer and to add value to their expectations. This change in business perspective, becoming more oriented toward the customer's needs, proved fundamental. In conclusion, a customer-oriented strategy enables organizations to make more accurate decisions and to be resilient to changes in the context, thus ensuring customer satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of adaptation.

Keywords: strategy, customer, satisfaction, innovation, global, success, profitability

1. Introduction

The industry is constantly transforming, so many that just when one has barely originated, the next revolution arrives to change everything, as is happening with the fifth industrial revolution. The digital transformation immersed in this fifth industry is a disruptive situation, whereby society adopts new methods, models, and tools to operate in a certain way. These changes or digital transformations generate technological advances that promote efficiency and improvement in various fields, such as business, finance, transportation, or customer service.

Industry 4.0 or the fourth digital revolution is characterized by the advent of intelligent automation technologies. In this regard, Industry 5.0 seeks to increase the potential of this digital transformation and base it on a much more efficient and meaningful human–machine collaboration. Coelho et al. [1] state that this new era will offer a vision of industry that goes beyond efficiency and productivity as the only objectives, as it will strengthen the role and contribution of industry to society, placing the well-being of the worker at the center of the production process and using new technologies to provide prosperity beyond employment and growth, while respecting the production limits of the planet. Thus, the fifth industrial revolution is the transformation that will replace Industry 4.0 and consists mainly of the commitment to value industries, centered on the human being and the effective interconnection between processes, systems, and machines.

This brings with it a challenge for organizations, as they often confuse a customer-focused strategy with customer service, which are very different definitions. The customer-oriented strategy is aligned with the development and delivery of products and services of an organization with the needs of a customer to maximize the benefits perceived by the customer, generating a long-term value relationship with the company [2], while the customer service approach only integrates and manages the elements that allow having an interface between the customer and the company [3, 4] and may not reflect the benefits perceived by the customer.

However, the great challenge that organizations are facing on the road to the 5.0 revolution is how they can transform their organizational processes to maximize the benefits expected from their customers and continuously generate value to maintain long-term relationships in a changing world. Frank et al. [5] identified that to achieve this challenge, it is necessary to use technology to collect, analyze, and transform data into valuable information for the company that allows it to make decisions more accurately to meet the new needs of customers in this new context, becoming a new organizational challenge, such as the use of technology as a tool to help strategic decision-making. Cheng and Dogan [6] identified that the use of data to understand customer behavior allows the establishment of a continuous value delivery strategy, since it places the customer as a fundamental part of the strategy, facilitating business decision-making, giving rise to the phenomenon of *customer centricity*.

Azeem et al. [7] identified that in modern business scenarios, companies have implemented customer-centric approaches to enable customer relationship management to trigger business excellence, as they focus primarily on retaining profitable customers, thanks to the impact that technologies have had as a tool to

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provide timely information for decision-making. However, Mourtzis et al. [8] emphasize that the entry of the 5.0 revolution will require changes in the data management models we are using today to make business decisions since the incursion of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) will break the traditional paradigms of enterprise business models and customer behavior patterns.

It is for this reason that this research study poses the following research question: What are the success factors that have allowed leading companies in the business sector to establish a value strategy with their customers in a changing environment, allowing them to maintain a sustainable relationship in the short, medium, and long term? To achieve this goal, a selection of documented experiences of three business leaders who have successfully achieved their strategic objectives based on a *customer-centricity* approach was made, allowing to establish a preliminary roadmap to be used by the business sector.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to contribute to the state of the art with the factors that can influence the achievement of business goals successfully, through the use of a strategy based on *customer centricity*, in the digital era.

2. Literature Review

In an increasingly competitive market, understanding customer needs is becoming a key factor for business success. Companies that manage to align themselves with the expectations of their consumers not only improve their brand image but also generate loyalty and sustained growth. Therefore, to adequately drive customer orientation toward the achievement of strategic goals, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the key pieces to achieve business success.

Kosch and Szarucki [9] argue that the first key piece of strategic advantage is not only to create a detailed plan but also to analyze the internal and external environment, identify opportunities and threats, and allocate resources efficiently; it is this comprehensive approach that allows organizations not only to survive but also to thrive in competitive and dynamic markets. However, the evolution of telecommunications, the massification of the Internet, and easy access to technology by individuals have led organizations to change their paradigms to generate a strategic competitive advantage and to innovate in an increasingly competitive market, and understanding customer needs has become a key factor for business success. Companies that manage to align themselves with the expectations of their consumers not only improve their brand image but also generate loyalty and sustained growth. Therefore, to adequately drive customer orientation toward the achievement of strategic goals, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the key pieces to achieve business success.

Prajogo [10] states that companies need to be constantly searching for new products and services in the face of dynamic changes in the environment, to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the business strategy, with innovation being the mechanism that has allowed to ensure business performance. Tantiyaswasdikul [11] states that an innovation strategy based on the use of a model such as *Design Thinking* allows a better proximity to customer requirements since its approach is based on achieving empathy from the context to the company, managing to provide products and services according to their needs and maximizing the expected benefit.

This change in approach has enabled new methods of approaching companies to understand customer needs in a globalized world, allowing the identification of new ways to improve the customer experience. Holmlund et al. [12] state that customer experience has become a sustainable source of competitive differentiation, as recent advances in big data analytics have highlighted the possibility of obtaining information about customers for customer experience management, giving a step-by-step guide on how to implement or apply a successful strategic framework. Leão and da Silva [13] state that data-driven decision-making processes have had a profound impact on strategies for competitive advantage, as they have succeeded in driving innovation, efficiency, and cost reduction, thanks to new models that enable improved economies of scope and scale due to the emergence of digital platforms, altering old competitive environments into new networked "extended business ecosystems."

Zhao [14] states that a successful strategy in the digital era must be customer-oriented, being necessary to identify the right customer segment and to ensure a logical, adequate, and sustainable strategic advantage for the company, based on continuous innovation. Ferrer-Estévez and Chalmeta [15] complement this approach, arguing that to achieve a successful customer-oriented strategy, it is necessary to use tools to generate empathy with customer requirements and the environment, achieving greater customer satisfaction and even being able to generate loyalty to the products and services offered by the company.

Al-Shammari [16] and Reitsamer and Becker [17] agree that a strategy based on customer orientation is synonymous with future competitiveness since the business environment is constantly changing and companies need to innovate to generate sustainability and growth over time; however, growth can be ephemeral because competitors copy product innovations, leading the company to change its strategy to a model based on the customer as the central axis since he is the most valuable resource for the organization.

Agag et al. [18] identify that a strategy with a customer-oriented approach allows conceptualizing, detailing, and refining the knowledge of the individual's behavior patterns, from the point of view of the company's operational management, providing a frame of reference for the customer's expectations, since it is possible to go deeper into the human being's background, thus establishing a strategy more focused on the needs of the environment. However, Frank et al. [5] emphasize that designing a customer-oriented service strategy is not a simple task, since the organization needs to know all the information about the customer and the context, which is not a complex and costly process within the processes of organizational transformation, and many companies are not achieving it, with this evidence being the basis of the origin of the present study.

However, Arevalo-Ascanio et al. [19] and Ghuge et al. [20] identified that to achieve a successful customer-oriented strategy, it is necessary to establish a management model based on the operational level, which allows the use of technology to collect, analyze, and transform data, where, with the help of data science, mathematical models can be built that approximate the needs of customers. Abbasi et al. [21] argue that a strategy based on data management, which allows the collection of the background and consequences of a transaction with a customer, allows for improvement in the orientation of how to provide value to the customer. However, achieving value to a customer is not an easy task, since innovation requires a change of processes and culture in the organization [22].

The beginning of the 5.0 revolution brings with it changes in business paradigms, making it necessary for organizations to adapt their transactional strategy based on the push of products, goods, and services, from within the company and toward the environment; by a model more adjusted to the new globalized environments, being the customer the main focus of the

organization, giving rise to opportunities in the state of the art to address this issue, being this research a contribution that seeks to guide companies toward a new competitive model.

3. Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach, as it developed the object under investigation, through the identification of regularities and relationships between the components of the study [23]. Additionally, it established a subcategory within the exploratory approach, since it identified the characteristics of the object of study related to the customer-focused strategy to maximize the expected benefits, allowing it to explain the trend of the studied phenomenon [24].

Additionally, the case study method was used as a qualitative research technique, as it allowed a deep understanding of events, entities, or phenomena [25], which allowed to pinpoint the characteristics in the search process and to perform a more accurate systematic analysis of the phenomenon studied. Consequently, the case study examined assets and studies on solutions based on a successful organizational strategy based on customer focus. Therefore, to achieve this objective, data collection was proposed through a document review using a digital search to find openly documented case studies related to the research topic, using online databases such as Business Source Complete, EBSCO host, Emerald, Science Direct, Scopus, Pro-Quest Central, and Web of Science. The search included only articles written in English and Spanish.

The selection criteria for the case studies were global companies with more than 15 years in the market that have implemented a change in their business strategy from a project-based approach to a customer-centric approach and that have successfully achieved their business objectives, to ensure that the data collected was from companies with a robust and stable level of maturity in the market, resulting in the selection of three case studies, based on the experience and innovative approach of a customer-oriented strategy, for further analysis.

Then, in the process of data analysis, a documentary review of the main characteristics used in the business strategies of each organization, which allowed them to maximize the benefits of their customers through the contribution of value using a customer-focused strategy, was carried out, for which the main success factors of this strategy were identified, together with the expert judgment of the researcher. Finally, the individual results of each case study were contrasted to establish a general pattern of a customer-focused strategy as an input to be used by future organizations.

4. Results

Once the literature review was completed, we proceeded with the exploratory search and analysis of representative case studies for a customer-centric business strategy.

Case 1: Amazon

Ukeni [26] in his study documents the main factors that were used by Amazon, as part of its customer-focused strategy, which are detailed in the following analysis:

Background

Amazon started its operations in the year 1995, as an e-commerce platform for the sale of books, with its main strategic focus on obsessively focusing on the customer.

A characteristic aspect of Amazon's business strategy was the implementation of technological functions to collect and analyze customer reviews, as this helps them to identify their buying pattern, based on recommendations given by another customer,

Figure 1
Amazon strategy

search history, and previous purchases, allowing them to establish a personalized customer experience.

Customer-centric innovations

Figure 1 shows the customer-centric innovations that made Amazon successful.

As shown in Figure 1, Amazon's strategy was based on three pillars: (1) customer first, to obtain timely feedback from the internal context; (2) focus on technology, as it serves as a tool to capture customer feedback in real-time; and (3) exceptional management, by establishing response times appropriate to the market need.

Challenges encountered

Any disruptive process that requires a change transformation is difficult at the beginning, where Amazon was no exception, since in its beginnings, the innovation processes driven by the company to capture a better customer orientation were affected by the bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000.

Basco [27] analyzes the effect and impact of the dot-com bubble phenomenon in the period between 1997 and 2000, a period where there was a strong growth in the economic values of companies related to the Internet, thus causing a strong economic bubble that led to the bankruptcy of many companies.

At this time, Amazon needed a new source of revenue to boost its retail business. In 2002, Amazon introduced its Amazon Web Services to the market, which initially offered a statistical data model on Internet traffic, which was later expanded with complementary applications such as Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) and Simple Storage Service (S3) for online data rental and storage.

Results

In 2005, Amazon launched Amazon Prime as a service that offered the shipment of products to customers within two days, based on a subscription made by the customer, with the purpose of generating customer loyalty by capturing their data and inferring the future purchase experience.

From here, Amazon began a series of innovations in its processes, procedures, and products in all areas of the company, in order to improve the customer experience with the help of technology as a means of collecting and analyzing data.

The result of these continuous innovation processes based on a customer experience approach has led to the company being

Figure 2
3M strategy
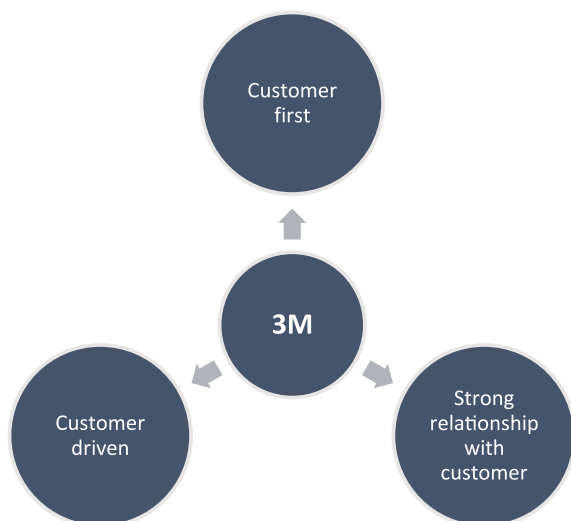
recognized as the largest and most successful e-commerce retailer in the Western world.

Case 2: 3M

Frankenberger et al. [28] in their study document the main factors that were used by 3M, as part of its customer-focused strategy, which are detailed in the following analysis:

Background

Five businessmen founded the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, known today as 3M Company, on June 13, 1902. The company's goal was to mine corundum, but it failed; later, it moved the company to Duluth, Minnesota, and began manufacturing sandpaper products. In 1962, it moved its headquarters to the 3M facility in Maplewood, Minnesota.

The company has several divisions that create products for specific industries: safety and industrial, transportation and electronics, healthcare, and consumer. Whitin, the consumer division, has its Post-it products.

3M realized that their customers needed Post-its to adhere to new surfaces. So, they created the Post-it Extreme note to withstand harsh conditions, creating product innovation based on customer needs for use in new environments.

In this way, the company shifted its focus from the product to the consumer, improving the lives of its customers.

Customer-centric innovations

Figure 2 shows the customer-centric innovations that made 3M successful.

As shown in Figure 2, 3M's strategy was based on three pillars: (1) customer first, to obtain timely feedback from the internal context; (2) customer driven, for the customer to understand the value of 3M's products; and (3) strong relationship with the customer, since it was important to obtain timely feedback from the customer on the products offered by the company.

Challenges encountered

The big challenge for 3M's customer-focused strategy was to integrate sustainability into each new product; this implies that each new product must have a Sustainability Value Commitment that demonstrates how it generates a positive impact for the common good.

Given that 3M launches approximately 1,000 new products each year, this commitment has a major impact on innovation and a

sustainable future, which is why maintaining close contact with the customer was an important pillar of their business strategy.

Results

Using the power of innovation, 3M developed a customer-centric strategy that generated impact by creating customer-focused products and services that help customers focus on and understand their needs.

The initiative also included after-sales support and regular interaction with the customer to better understand their needs; this feedback became one of the sources of centricity.

For distribution, the company relies on subsidiaries that act as a single point of contact for customers, adding value and selling products with unique features. Its marketing department continues to work and drive sales to customers, helping potential new customers understand the value of its new product.

In this particular distribution model, the subsidiary takes legal responsibility for product quality, maintains a close relationship with customers, and organizes product delivery.

3M is an example of a company that achieves greater customer contact. Thus, they obtain relevant information to improve the customer-focused product or service.

Case 3: SAP

Frankenberger et al. [28] in their study document the main factors that were used by SAP, as part of its customer-focused strategy, which are detailed in the following analysis:

Background

SAP is a global technology company founded in 1972 by five entrepreneurs who believed that technology would create value for businesses. Since its inception, the company has aligned itself by following market trends and its customer strategy models.

Customer focus quickly became a necessity when implementing its enterprise resource planning software. Starting as a standalone solution, SAP has evolved over the years into a cloud solution, taking advantage of the new market availability of cloud services.

Customers demanded real-time data on their business information, and the company created a complete cloud platform to meet the demands, creating key functions with customer self-service options and omnichannel support, creating value.

Customer-centric innovations

Figure 3 shows the customer-centric innovations that made SAP successful.

As shown in Figure 3, SAP's strategy was based on three pillars: (1) customer first, to capture customer needs promptly; (2) customer self-service, to have the customer design solutions tailored to their SAP requirements; and (3) network partners, to have the global reach and coverage to capture all of their customers' needs.

Challenges encountered

The great challenge of SAP's customer-focused strategy was the cultural change of the SAP ecosystem. With the acceleration of telecommunications, the massification of the Internet, and the ease of access to technology by customers, the requirements of customers were more demanding; this implied adapting to the new needs of customers and ensuring that SAP is considered an essential part of strategic decision-making.

The transition to the cloud, customer experience, and e-commerce were key pillars of this strategy to meet this challenge.

Results

SAP firmly believed that the nature of the company's success was that customers were immersed at the core of the business. Also, the company understood that it was necessary to provide customers with real-time decision-making with real-time data, drastically

Figure 3
SAP strategy
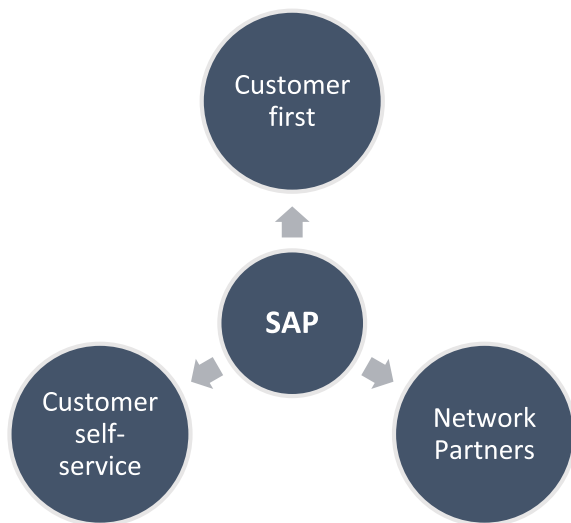
reducing the uncertainty of the business owner's decision-making process.

In recent years, SAP has invested more than $50 billion in acquisitions and research, development, and innovation to bring to life products that showcase innovation, such as the High-performance Analytic Appliance, which embeds and stores database data in its memory for fast analytics and high-speed transactions.

These new capabilities provided corporate clients with insights into their own customers' behavior and preferences, dramatically improving their customer orientation and overall customer experience.

Keeping customer focus at its core, SAP relies on a network of partners around the world to stay in touch with its enterprise customers, helping, enhancing, and customizing ERP to suit customers' needs, leveraging its partners' support centers and sales force with a shared legal liability with them.

This approach reduces end-customer contact, relying heavily on its network of trusted partners.

Once the analysis of the case studies was completed, we proceeded to the triangulation of the main success factors used by the selected companies in their customer-focused experience strategy. Table 1 shows a summary of the results obtained.

Table 1
Synthesis of common factors for a customer-focused business strategy

Factors	Amazon	3M	SAP
Customer first	X	X	X
Technology focused	X		
Exceptional management	X		
Customer driven		X	
A strong relationship with the customer		X	
Customer self-service			X
Network partners			X

Table 1 shows all companies analyzed agree that a business strategy must take the customer first as the primary input; that is, the focus of any product, good, or service must start by taking into consideration the feedback from the customer and the environment being the starting point to generate opportunities within the company that can maximize the expected benefits and provide value to the customer.

5. Discussion

The 5.0 revolution is redefining the interaction between humans and technology, where the focus is not only on efficiency and automation but on closer collaboration between humans and machines to achieve personalized and meaningful results. In this new paradigm, a customer-centric strategy becomes more crucial than ever for companies.

Chen et al. [29] note that this new era will bring personalization and customer experience to unprecedented levels, thanks to the use of advanced technologies such as AI and data analytics that will significantly improve the ability of companies to deliver personalized experiences, reflected not only in improved customer satisfaction but also in increased loyalty and retention. Alves et al. [30] emphasize that this new era will focus on technologies that complement human capabilities, rather than replace them, with companies that implement with companies that apply customer-centric strategies, as they can leverage these technologies to create solutions that truly meet their customers' needs. Bresciani et al. [31] show that companies with customer-centric strategies are more agile and able to adapt quickly to market changes; in a dynamic business environment, this can be the difference between success and failure. However, Lemon and Verhoef [32] highlight that companies that prioritize customer experience will see significant economic benefits; these include higher customer lifetime value, improved retention rates, and increased word-of-mouth recommendations.

This was reflected in the case studies analyzed in this research, since the companies studied made a change in the focus of their business strategy, reflecting significant changes in their policies, processes, procedures, and organizational culture to adapt better and faster to the environment. Fader [2] mentions that a business strategy focused on the customer allows for obtaining a strategic advantage due to the capacity for innovation that is generated in the organizational culture evolving toward an agile culture.

However, Sheth et al. [33] and Ukeni [26] agree that the path to a customer-focused strategy can be complicated for many organizations due to the lack of a strategy based on innovation. Additionally, the onset of revolution 5.0 brings with it additional constraints immersed in this new context.

Pardo-Jaramillo et al. [34] state that the integration of advanced technologies such as AI, Internet of Things (IoT), and Big Data analytics can be complex and costly, as many organizations lack the technology infrastructure and knowledge to implement these technologies effectively, which can limit their ability to become customer-centric. Crnobrnja et al. [35] highlight that cultural change within organizations is a significant challenge, as although technologies are available, resistance to change by employees and management can impede the adoption of a truly customer-centric strategy. Wang et al. [36] highlight that the intensive use of personal data to personalize experiences raises privacy and security concerns, where companies must be extremely cautious with the handling of customer data to avoid security breaches and loss of trust. Lei et al. [37] mention that the investments needed to implement advanced technologies and train staff can be prohibitive, especially for small and medium-sized businesses, where they stress that the high costs

associated with digital transformation can limit the ability of smaller companies to compete with larger corporations that have greater resources. Meanwhile, Lähteenmäki et al. [38] highlight that rapid technological evolution can raise customer expectations to levels that companies may find difficult to meet, potentially leading to dissatisfaction if companies cannot consistently deliver high-quality, personalized experiences.

While it is true, the onset of this new era will bring opportunities and threats for both customers and companies. However, technology does not stand still, which brings with it more complex and demanding customer requirements and expectations with the emergence of new trends in customer-oriented strategy, which will be driven by emerging processes, procedures, and technologies that will facilitate business decision-making.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Broadly speaking, customer experience refers to the total perception that customers have of a company based on all their interactions with it; this encompasses everything from first contact to after-sales service. A customer experience-centric strategy involves designing and managing each of these touchpoints to ensure that customers receive consistent, positive, and memorable treatment. However, the constant evolution of technologies and changes in consumer behavior have led companies to rethink their customer experience strategies. In an increasingly uncertain and volatile world, the ability to adapt quickly to customer needs and expectations has become crucial.

However, the beginning of the 5.0 revolution is marked by the speed of technological change, globalization, and market variability. The ability to adapt and evolve is essential, and a strategy focused on customer experience can provide companies with the agility and resilience needed to meet these challenges, as new requirements will arise in the environment that will be driven by technological advances such as (1) hyper-personalization, (2) voice interaction, (3) customer journey, (4) virtual and augmented reality, (5) omnichannel, (6) AI-driven customer service, and (7) customer experience sustainability.

Uncertainty in the global marketplace requires companies to be extremely agile and able to adapt quickly to new circumstances, and companies focused on customer experience are best positioned to respond to changes in consumer behavior and market conditions, as these companies are in constant communication with their customers and use their feedback to improve and adjust their offerings. Constant customer feedback provides valuable information that can be used for innovation, as companies that focus on the customer experience are uniquely positioned to identify new market opportunities and develop innovative products and services that meet emerging customer needs.

Today's consumers are increasingly concerned about the sustainability and social responsibility of the companies with which they do business. Consequently, a customer experience-centric strategy can integrate these values at its core, creating a deeper and more meaningful connection with customers; this not only enhances brand perception but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the company.

To implement a customer experience-centric strategy, companies must follow several specific steps, ranging from creating a customer-centric organizational culture to using advanced technologies to enhance the customer experience. These steps include (1) creating a customer-centric culture, (2) using advanced technologies, (3) active listening and feedback, (4) personalizing the experience, and (5) measurement and evaluation.

The practical implications of the results obtained lead to a change of approach, from the perspective of the use of emerging technologies in the digital era. Therefore, it will become a guide to ensure the success or failure of companies when designing and executing their business strategy. The result of the study will serve as input for stakeholders, providing a roadmap for the promotion of a strategy based on information-based decision-making and understanding the role that technology plays in shaping organizational culture.

The implications from the theoretical perspective contemplate the development of research works in academia that include additional elements in the existing relationship between processes and procedures for a customer-focused strategy and the resilient role of stakeholders in the digital era, so the future lines of research are varied, given that the topic of study is very recent, broad and has infinite ramifications.

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Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by the author.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest in relation to this work.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Author Contribution Statement

Gabriel Silva-Atencio: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

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