

Customer Engagement and Perception of Customer Against Offline Vs Online Experience

Satya Narayan Mahapatra and Prince Kumar

Department of Management Studies, Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram University of Science & Technology, Murthal, India

ABSTRACT

Customer engagement concept is proliferated in the current decade, addressing the coinciding benefits and the direction of the relationship between the customer and the brand. Online shopping trends are sharply getting good responses. This study is a try to find out the reasons for considering offline versus online and vice versa. The respondents' shift was more towards the online, i.e. considering online is better option comparative. Semantic differential scale with eleven positive perceptions towards online shopping experience such as thrilling experience, customer centricity, easy to use and time-saving. And on the opposite end, the invert constructs were used, and five pointer scale was utilised. The customers are less towards the perception of that online shopping is necessary for their needs and a cheaper option in comparison of offline shopping. But they find online shopping is easy to use and customer friendly chosen by the majority. The data was collected from 377 Indian citizens who are shopping online for their various needs. Out of these respondents, more than 51% of them are buying online with a high frequency of monthly to fortnightly or even high.

Keywords-*Offline versus online shopping customer experience, customer engagement and semantic differential.*

INTRODUCTION

We can have better engagement with the customer by making them friend on the social media platform and ask their preference and what they want from the brand, that will help in proving the better-personalised services (Cabiddu, Carlo, & Piccoli, 2014). Personalisation is not limited to the customers or the brand, but this will help in multitudinous ways, such as helping the relationship. "Offerings, programs, or activities initiated by the organisation with a goal of connecting with or engaging their customers or potential customers may be referred to as customer engagement (CE) strategies," (Palmatier, Kumar, & Harmeling, 2017). The other important aspects are the quantifiable factors which can impact customer engagement. These aspects can be quantified through the quality of equipment used, time, prices, etc. (Leibowicz, Punjabi, O'Shaughnessy, & Margolis, 2018).

Human behaviour and cognition is significantly impacted by the time-related variables reason being it was majorly discussed in consumer psychology (Hornik, Ofir, & Shaanan-satchi, 2010). Better online platform design can affect price transparency, price reduction, and it can even improve customer outcomes (Leibowicz et al., 2018). The website experience may be immersive or stimulating, but these are not a sure reason for engagement. The site should be relevant and useful; hence the cognitive and affective commitment leads to a healthy relationship (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). "Brand experience is conceptualised as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Customers have a different set of priorities in accordance with their lifestyle and other sets of livelihood settings. Customer can choose price over time and others may vice-versa. Price and time have an inverse relationship. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason to be evaluated for brand-customer relationships such as demographical variables (Degeratu, Rangaswamy, & Wu, 2000). Customer value management is highly helpful in managing the technological resource utilisation. The technological investment is necessary, but it should be invested in such a way that it will facilitate customers (Verhoef & Lemon, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Easy to Use/Difficult to Use - What customer perceives is important and such perception can be ease of use and usefulness of the focal object. In social networks context it is easy to use these networks and to become skilful. Social networks are useful to making many things possible which are not possible in offline social networks (Rodrigues Pinho & Soares, 2011). One major reason against online shopping is automatization that should be managed in every possible senses such as sense of being original brand to customers. Making things automatic can be experienced as a threat to customer's autonomy and this can make customer feel bad about the brand in a way such as need-insulting and thwarting (Oulasvirta & Blom, 2007).

Reliable/Unreliable- In the case of online shopping platform, the only possible reason/value that customer considers the most is reliability of the shopping as compare to the offline shopping in all social classes such as upper middle class, lower middle class. However there is variability in the choices in context compared”(Seo & Lee, 2008).

Inexpensive/Expensive - Loyalty is always considered as the crucial consequence expected from relationship, importance of price is lesser in comparison to loyalty(Brown, 1990). Instead price is major reason in business communication. Importantly, price is antecedent for loyalty. Customers are price conscious but this is not equally affecting the relationship at every step(Cummins et al., 2014).

Intelligent Decision/Foolish Decision- In case of action and reaction process, in which customer perception is important reason in the direction of analysing it. Online purchases are two directional and considered as intelligent decision for customer and brand for many reasons(Cabiddu et al., 2014).

Thrilling Experience/Boring Experience- Intrinsic attractiveness can control the market so the business in the competition.(Gielens & Dekimpe, 2007). Colour can be an essential aspect for marketing which to make things attractive and immediate identifier of a brand. Every colour signifies some meaning to the situation and business such as golden colour signifies high quality (Singh, 2006).

Time Saving/Time Consuming- Time is considered as the fundamental concept in context of consumer behaviour(Hornik et al., 2010).(Degeratu et al., 2000) suggested that value of time is critical for online vs offline purchases and influences the choices. In the process first, they choose the product then the take decisions of shopping through preferred platform.

Customer Centricity/Not Customer centric- It is prevalent in the society that customer is king andthere are many definitions like this perception.(Verhoef & Lemon, 2013) find that customer profitability, customer lifetime value, and customer satisfaction are the matrices of customer centricity on the basis of use and acceptance. Brands are interested to be customer centric but they are not interested to alter the perception of making brand product centric, geographical centric or functional centric into the brand of truly customer centric(Selden & Macmillan, 2006).

Providing Excellent Value/Providing Poor Value- (Yuan & Wu, 2008) said that customer satisfaction is affected by experiential marketing, where experiential value is central. Customer patronage is highly helpful for marketing in many senses and patronage can be done through high value(Yang & Peterson, 2004).

Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory- Satisfaction is central of good relationship between customer and brand. This concept is famous testing criteria for measuring marketing output. (Brown, 1990) suggested that satisfied customer will purchases other products of the associated brand and other product line. **“Customer satisfaction, meanwhile, is defined as an overall positive or negative feeling about the net value of services received from a supplier”(Woodruff, 1997; Yang & Peterson, 2004)**

Customer Friendly Platform/Unfriendly Platform - It is tough to be customer friendly in every sense but this is a process making platform as friendly as possible on the consistently. Many brands are providing online games on the platform which affects the customer perception. Experience of

playfulness helps the brand perception in great way and the playfulness is initiative, and self-oriented(Wu & Liang, 2009).

Essential for purchasing/Not Necessary- Interaction is found the key to the process of the co-creation while key platform is internet(Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2001). (Morganosky & Cude, 2000) suggested that the only reason to purchase online is the customer are not able to reach the offline shop. But in current era there are numerous reason to purchases online as compare to offline shops. That is the central attempt of the study in multiple context.

The experience can be impacted by numerus reasons or stimuli which are used in the interaction in the brand and customer interaction. All the senses have impact on the evaluation concept of their experience with the brand. Sensory experience can lead to emotional experiences and intellectual experiences(Brakus et al., 2009). In case of online shopping, it is considered that they less number of senses are involved. But it is very clear that senses which are involved that are involved in high intensity as compared to offline involvement.

METHODOLOGY

The experience and customer engagement have strong bond and focal concept to their direction study. The engagement can be behavioural, cognitive, hedonic, psychological, and many such classifications are possible on the bases we constructed a semantic scale for online versus offline engagement and experience. The descriptive study was done on the valid sample of 377. The semantic differential scale was utilised from five pointer scale from 1 to 5. Where point 1 was towards negative perception and 5 was representing the positive aspects of the customer experience and engagement such offline vs online was difficult (1) to use versus easy to use (5). The numeral value of the scale is just for representation and interpretation of the data which was not used in the instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographical distributions are shown in the table 1 and table2. Male members were 70.8% and female were 28.6%. Majority respondents were unmarried with percentage of 65%. 48.8% of respondents were living in city, 28.6% from metro, 12.2% were from town and 10.3 % were from village. Mixes of income group is nearly distributed all over the given scales. It can be inferred from demographical data that lower income group was also responded in the survey and they were have positive perception about online shopping platforms as the semantic data is more in the direction of the positive experience constructs instead of the negative constructs.

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	267	70.8
Female	108	28.6
Others	2	.5
Total	377	100.0
Marital Status		
Unmarried	245	65.0
Married	130	34.5
Divorce	2	.5
Total	377	100.0
Purchasing Frequency		

Fortnightly	60	15.9
Monthly	133	35.3
Quarterly	113	30.0
Half-yearly or Yearly	71	18.8
Total	377	100.0

Table 1

“We find that defying combined industry wisdom in volatile and uncertain settings hurts performance, suggesting that a firm’s attempts to develop its own, distinct rules are likely to be dysfunctional.”(Gielens & Dekimpe, 2007)“In the perceived benefits dimension, consumers perceived online consumer reviews as helpful in gathering information about product features, functions, price ranges, quality and popularity. Reading online consumer reviews seems to help them save time and money and find best deals. This result is consistent with the previous studies that identified the positive values of online consumer reviews (Chatterjee, 2001; Clemons et al., 2006; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Park and Lee, 2008).”(Lee & Ma, 2012)

Total of eleven semantic differentials were used on five pointer scales in the study (figure 1). The pair of eleven scales were as follows. Respondents found the online shopping experience as the easy to use platform and also customer friendly experience too they felt. Least mean value is found in the case of the variable essential for purchasing. Hence customer not found the online platform as the platform without which they can’t shop. And another variable with least value is inexpensiveness of the online platform. They don’t find it cheaper in comparison of the offline shopping relatively.

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly Income		
Less than 10k	143	37.9
10k-20k	57	15.1
20k-40k	93	24.7
40k-80k	54	14.3
80k-1.6lakh	26	6.9
Above 1.6lakh	4	1.1
Total	377	100.0
Place of Living		
Metro	108	28.6
City	184	48.8
Town	46	12.2
Village	39	10.3
Total	377	100.0

Table 2

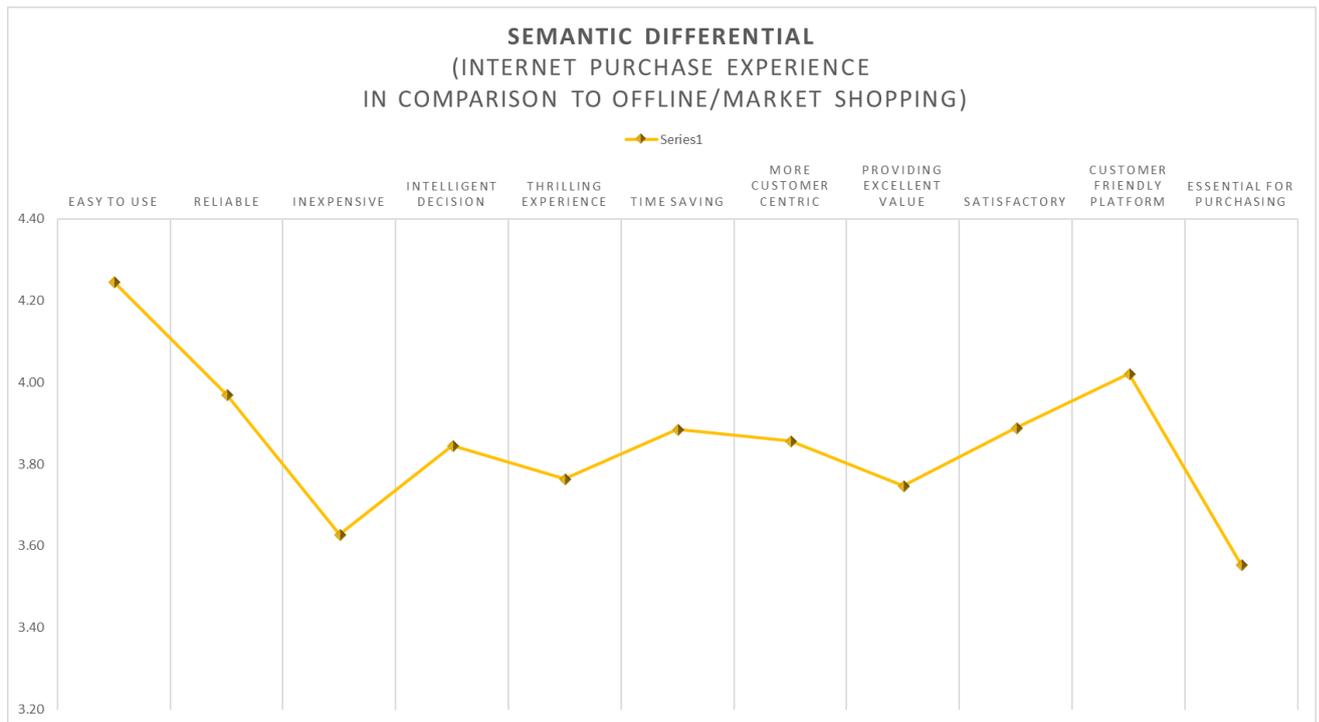


Figure 1

Results found that the customers were more interested in online shopping and consider it a positive set of experience. The set of the semantic differential scale was two dimensional with five pointer scales. On the right side of the instrument, the negative variables were pointed and on the other side, the positive aspects of the customer experience. The variable utilised to test the experience and customer engagement in semantic differential were eleven such as ‘easy to use vs difficult to use’, ‘boring experience vs thrilling experience’, ‘unfriendly platform vs customer-friendly platform’ and ‘providing poor value vs providing excellent value’. Mean scores of the customer experience in the semantic differential were more towards the positive perceptions of the customer.

Mean scores customer experience

	N	Mean
	Valid	
Easy to Use	377	4.25
Reliable	377	3.97
Inexpensive	377	3.63
Intelligent Decision	377	3.85
Thrilling Experience	377	3.76
Time Saving	377	3.89
More Customer Centric	377	3.86
Providing Excellent Value	377	3.75
Satisfactory	377	3.89
Customer Friendly Platform	377	4.02
Essential for purchasing	377	3.55

Figure 2

CONCLUSION

Marketing is changing the continually some says rapidly some says exponentially. The common thing is the change which is in the continuously in considerations of the researchers and practitioners. That is good for the process and competition leads to investing in the resources. Another focus of business

is customer-centricity is essential and meant for the market matrices with the change in marketing vocabulary. Firms are working to win the customers by customer centricity in marketing practices. Individual customers are essential for this process of leading the market, but customers are dramatic changes in the behaviour and other aspects of the study in the context of the business. s.”(Sheth et al., 2001) In this study we can say that the customer interested in the online business with very little exceptions. They think technically about the value given by the business online and offline and they compare many aspects. As we took eleven aspects and they responded variably to each aspect of the semantic differential scale. Which can be implied as that customers are very conscious about various value given in the return of what they sacrificed. “He value of experience thus increases when service encounter elements are perceived as positive”.(Wu & Liang, 2009) Demographic and online shopping variables affects the decision of the customer about the purchasing of the grocery goods and services and it’s important to consider the demographical variables and the online shopping variables(Morganosky & Cude, 2000). Customer may be motivated to shop online due to any reasons but that doesn’t mean that the bond is stronger than of the offline shopping platform, perceived value must considered seriously (Broekhuizen, 2006). Engaging the customer in the contented and overly satisfied way is necessary in the present era of customer centricity. The online purchase decision is more emotional instead of reason bases as compare to offline purchases(Bosnjak, Galesic, & Tuten, 2007). This is highly important for the brand to consider all possible value perceptions and the list of value perception should be improved continuously, aggressively, expressively and be the leader of the market in value return to customer. Some constructs were used in this study indirectly such as interactivity. But this interactivity is in itself a vast possibility for future research in marketing context. “Consumers may, in general, expect to find more enjoyment in interactive environments than they do when shopping in physical environments”(Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001). This is a novel research area where customer experience and customer engagement is shifting from well established concepts such as satisfaction to hedonic settings by providing such experiences through every possible means. This can be the fresh area of study which can lead to eminent relationship matrix.

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