An Examination of Antecedents and Outcomes of Online Retailing Customer Experience Quality: A Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Purpose: With the replacement of service quality with the experiences in the competitive battleground of businesses the understanding of experience quality becomes inevitable . Hence, the purpose of the paper is to identify the constituents and outcomes of customer experience quality for online retailing.

Research Design: The focus of the search was exclusively within peer-reviewed papers from a range of international sources using prestigious databases such as ABI/Inform, ScienceDirect, J-Store, Emerald, Sage, Springer, Routledge, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar.

Findings: A conceptual model is constructed by identifying the antecedents and outcomes of the customer experience service quality for online retailing by reviewing the literature. The antecedents of customer experience quality are website quality, product value, and customer service. The outcomes of customer experience quality are satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

Managerial Implications: The study identifies the antecedents of customer experience quality for online retailing sector. Marketer can take clue from the model and frame their strategies to woo the consumers and provide them unique experience while shopping from their website.

Limitations and Future Scope: This paper provides only the theoretical model regarding the antecedents and outcomes of the experience quality in e-retailing. Empirical testing can be undertaken to verify the model.

Keywords: Antecedents, Customer experience, Experience quality, Online retailing, Outcomes

Introduction

With the help of online platform customers can any time compare the products, its prices, standard of service delivery, and also share their service experiences globally by just typing few words and pressing some clicks. Not only customers but the retailers are also benefitted with this new online platform as it is an alternative channel to reach customers. Nowadays customers are looking for the perfect shopping experience rather than just being satisfied with the product and service. This scenario added some new challenges for the retailers (Konus et al. 2008)-for example, how to provide customers an attractive experience in e-retailing context? which factors contribute to e-retail customer experience? Earlier customer experience was confined till retail stores (Chen & Yongsheng, 2012).

Since online retailing and traditional retailing are not the same phenomenon the determinants of customer experience cannot be same for both types of retailing (Puccinelli, et al., 2009).Cho & Park (2001) established that online retailing is relevent context for studying experience quality because we are still in infancy stage of understanding regarding the experiential variables of a website. Furthermore, the earlier consumer experience quality measurement scales are based on general service system (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Klaus & Maklan, 2012; Kim et al. 2011) while studies established that customer experiences are context dependent (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010; Yuan & Wu, 2008; Maklan & Klaus, 2011).

Hence these instruments needs to be explored subsequently in a context-specific setting (Lemke et al., 2011). Furthermore, identifying customer experience as an important research topic and the Marketing Science

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Institute highlighted it as tier-one research priority for 2014-2016 and 2016-2018(MSI 2016).Thus, a need is felt to identify thedriversof customer experience quality for online retailing and also its outcomes. To this end, the present paper aims: First, to give an overview of the differnet aspects of customer service experience in literature. Second, to identify the drivers and outcomes of online retailing customer service experience.

Theoretical Foundation

What IS Experience?

When we think about experience, generally we define it as an emotional or affective dimension of our mind. It is something that happens in the people's mind. It is a mental journey(Sundbo, 2009), an act of memorizing about any event, product or service which we purchased and used. In service marketing literature the term 'experience' is defined as how the customers characterize their reactions regarding service delivery (Helkkula, 2010). It is a perceived judgement about the excellence or superiority of the customer experience (Lemke et al., 2011).

Pullman & Gross (2004) defined experience as an outcome of the consumer's responses after interacting with physical and relational elements during service provision and consumption.Additionally, some scholars defined experience as the 'take-away' impressions created about the service during hiring or using it (Berry et al. 2002). Later, with the advent of the concept of 'experience economy' experience is considered as a form of economic offering which is difficult to imitate and replace hence instrumental in creating value for customers and fostering customer satisfaction, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth(Manthiou et al., 2014; Berry et al., 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Customer Service Experience

With the replacement of service quality with the experiences in the competitive battleground of businesses the understanding of experience quality becomes inevitable(Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Till now very few studies have measured customers' perceived experienceand identified its dimensions(Chang & Horng, 2010; Kim et al., 2011).

Hirschman & Holbrook(1982), explained service experience as "three Fs" namely, fantasies, feelings and fun and oflately it has been described as combination of experience, entertainment, exhibitionism, and evangelizing or the "four Es" (Holbrook, 2000).Pine & Gilmore(1998), metaphored the customer experienceas theatrical experience by defining each interaction between customer and company as a stage play. Literature is divided into various views for customer service experience. According to one view customer service experience quality is conceptualized as the customers' emotional judgement about the entire experience (Gronross & C., 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989; Chang & Horng, 2010). Novak et al., (2001) explained the cognitive view of experience quality. The other school considers it as both cognitive and emotional construct (Edvardsson, 2005; Juttner et al., 2013).

Gentile et al.(2007) explained the holistic view of experience quality by revealing six components of itnamely sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational. Zomerdijk & Voss (2010) defined service experience concept to be context-dependent because of the variation in the judgement of the customers due to different environments.Verhoef, et al. (2009) confirmed that shoppers will always have an 'experience' while purchasing services irrespective of the magnitude of the experience quality. In literature, most of the studies focused on affective and social aspects of service experience(Chang & Horng, 2010). Grove et al. (1998) argued that service personnel, consumers, physical environment and the service performance itself are four components of customer service experience quality. Thus, customer service experience can be concluded as multidimensional construct.

Conceptual Model of Customer Service Experience

With the more holistic view of online customer service experience in retailing context a conceptual model has been developed (figure 1). Determinants were adaptedfrom the literature review on customer experience in the context of the study setting as suggested by Ponsignon et al. (2015). A set of constructs was generated from the previous studies pretaining to the customer experience. Three dimensions of customer

experience are selected: Website quality, value for money, and Customer service.Two moderator variables namely shopping goals and web-specific self-efficacy were alsoincluded in the model. The study also aims to assess the impact of customer experience quality on important behavioural outcomes, such as satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Table 1 below shows the attributes definitions, hypotheses framed for the study, and the lierature related to each construct.

AntecedentVariables

The present study identified four antecedent variables (supported through literature) which independently influence the customer experience in online retailing .

Web site quality: High quality of retail websites is must for attracting customers and influence the shopping decisions of the site visitors.Firms can also use the quality of their websites as a differentiating variable and get registered themselves in the memory of the customers (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Websites play a significant role in the overall marketing communication mix by complementing direct selling activities, providing basic company information, and present supplemental material to customers (Berthon et al., 1996;Muylle et al.,2004).The present study adopted four dimensions to measure website quality namely ease of use (Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003), information quality(Nelson et al. 2005; McKinney et al. 2002), privacy/security(Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Pearson et al., 2012), and site design (Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003).

Table 1
Summary of Attributes, Their Definitions, Hypotheses Framed and Supporting Literature

Attribute	Explanation	HYPOTHESES Framed	Key Supporting Literature
Ease of Use	The extent to which the web site is perceived to be user friendly (Muylle et al., 2004)	1a. The greater the conveniencein using the website , the greater the level of website quality	Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Muylle et al., 2004;Yang et al., 2004;Collier & Bienstock, 2006
Information Quality	The state of the actual data in terms of accuracy, timeliness, and consistency (Nelson et al. 2005).	1b. The greater the information quality on the website, the greater the level of website quality.	McKinney et al. 2002; Janda et al., 2002; Nelson et al. 2005; Bressolles et al., 2007
Privacy/Security	Safety of site from intrusion and personal information protected(Zeithaml et al., 2000)	1c. The greater the level of privacy maintaied by the website, the greater the level of website quality.	Bailey & Pearson, 1983 ; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Yang et al., 2004; Parasuraman et al. , 2005; Pearson et al. , 2012.
Design	Includes uncluttered screen, easy navigation, and fast loading of web pages (Szymanski & Hise, 2000).	1d. The greater customer friendly design of the website, the greater the level of website quality.	Yoo & Donthu, 2001 ; Szymanski & Hise, 2000 ;Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003;Lee & Lin, 2005 ; Collier & Bienstock, 2006
Value for Money	It is defined as a pricing of products and services that reflects benefits delivered and relationship status (Lemke et al. , 2011).	2 The more the incentives/discounts given by the service provider , the greater the level of customer service experience.	Chiou-Wei & Inman, 2008; Ailawadi et al. , 2009, Kim et al. 2011;Lemke et al. , 2011
Customer Service	It focuses on the interactions between users and staff (Rowley, 1999).	3. The better the customer service, the greater the level of customer service experience.	Rowley, 1999 , Brady & Cronin, 2001 ; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016

Goals	It implies the reason for shopping like entertainment, recreation, social interaction etc. (Tauber, 1972).	4. The effect of website quality on customer service experience would be moderated by consumer goals.	Puccinelli, et al., 2009 ; Verhoef, et al., 2009 ; Lemke et al., 2011
Web Self -efficacy	An individual's perception of one's capability in using a specific application or service within the domain of general internet computing (Hsu & Chiu, 2004)	5. The effect of website quality on customer service experience would be moderated by self efficacy.	Klein & Ford, 2002 ; Lehto, Kim, &Morrison, 2006; Rose et al., 2012
Satisfaction	It is defined as the cumilation of a series of customer experiences(Meyer & Schwager, 2007).	6. Customer service experience positively affects the satisfaction.	Shankar et al. 2003;Janda & Ybarra, 2005; Khalifa & Vanessa 2007 ;Lin & Bannett, 2014
Trust	It is consumer's willingness to rely on the seller/e-retailer (Jarvenpaa et al.,1999)	7. Customer service experience positively affects the trust.	Jarvenpaa et al. ,1999, Lee & Turban, 2001
Loyalty	It is deeply held commitment to re-buy a preferred product/service consistently in future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Oliver, 1999).	8. Customer service experience positively affects loyalty.	Lin & Bannett, 2014 ; Fernandes & Cruz, 2016

Value for Money: It is an important aspect of consumer experience quality whether website/retailer reflects benefits delivered to its buyers. Some studies postulated that promotional policy of the firms plays as a key strategic decision for customer experience management (Ailawadi et al., 2009; Chiou-Wei & Inman, 2008).Kim et al. 2011 established value for money as an important aspect of the consumer experience. Value for money has been established as an embedded value category which is parallel to service quality(Verhoef et al., 2009). In a competitive marketplace, pricing is a pressing issue and need to be considered widely(Rowley, 1999).

Customer Service: Pleasant and helpful staff who respond to the requests of the users is an integral part of the customer service experience (Rowley, 1999). Stein & Ramaseshan (2016) and Wang et al. (2001) established that customers interactions with the employees or customerservice staff are the important aspects of customers' encounter at different touch points with company. Similarly, Brady & Cronin (2001) postulated that front-line employees plays significant role in developing service environments. McLean & Wilson (2016) established in their study that customers need customer support with service representative during utilitarian search for online information.

Moderating Variables: The model includes various moderator variables such as consumers' shopping goals and web-specific self-efficacy. The present study posits that effect of considered determinants on customer service experience is influenced by these variables.Customers are goal oriented for purchasing and consuming goods and services (Jones, 1999). Consumers do purposeful shopping such as entertainment, recreation, social interaction or intellectual stimulation (Arnold & Kristy, 2003 ; Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). The service experience of the consumers may be different for the same e-retailer.For example- a task-oriented customer may feel more positive customer experience about assortment than experientially oriented customer(Verhoef, et al., 2009).Many studies have studied the impact of self-efficacy on computer-related use. Self-efficacy is a kind of self-evaluation that inflences behavioral related decisions (Bandura, 1982). When people perform task comfortably using necessary knowledge and skill, they are more likely to engage with the website (Wood & Bandura, 1989).
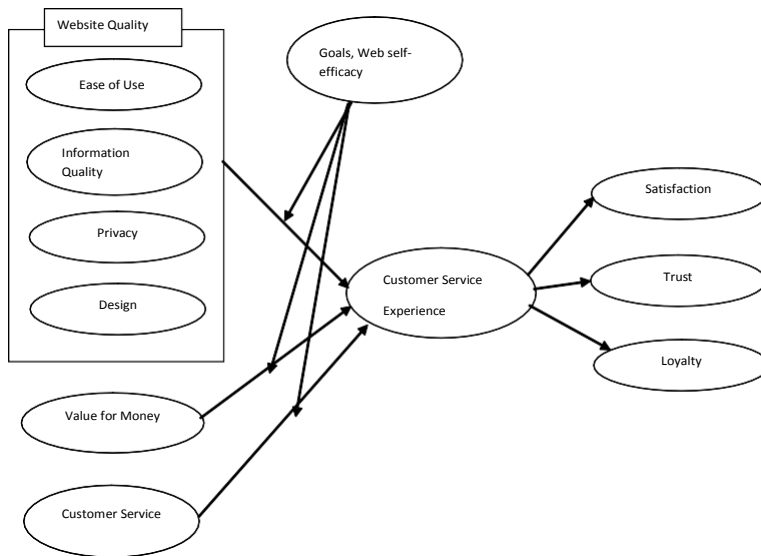
Figure 1. Conceptual Model Showing Antecedents and Outcomes of Online Retailing Customer Service Experience

Effects of Online Retailing Customer Service Experience Previous studied suggested various outcomes of customer service experience quality such as satisfaction, loyalty, trust, word-of-mouth, repurchase intention(Janda et al., 2005; Chatura et al., 2008). The three outcomes namely satisfaction(Shankar et al. 2003; Khalifa & Vanessa, 2007; Lin & Bannett, 2014), trust(Bart et al.,2005) and loyalty(Fernandes & Cruz, 2016; Lin & Bannett, 2014) of online retail customer service experience quality has been identified for the model suggested by the present study.Rose et al.(2012) postulated that customer satisfaction is an effect of postive emotional and cognitive states of online service experience.Janda & Ybarra (2005)posit the relationship between online experience and customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction: In e-retailing, satisfaction results from the customer's evaluation of the service experience across a number of attitudes(Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Jin & Park, 2008). Literature suggests that cumulative satisfaction is formed by both cognitive and affective experiences of the customers hence not only the performance of the website but also the design and aesthetic side of the website also matter for the customers(Homburg et al., 2006).It has been established as an important link to future customer patronage, which affects the market share and profitability(Kumar et al., 2013).

Tʀust: Because of the physical separation between vendor and buyer in online shopping trust becomes the crucial factor. Bart et al.(2005) established that in the context of online retailing, retailer's website is equivalent to the physical store where the customer build perceptions of trust. In a cross cultural empirical study conducted in U.S., Singapore, and China it has been found that e-retailer's reputation,vendor's systeme assurance and the consumers' propensity are the important determinants of the trust (Teo & Liu, 2007).Trust reduces the perceived risk and complexities for the buyers and trigger purchases (Gefen, 2000).Ferraro (1998), observed that without consumer trust, e-retailing will never reach to the optimum level of economic potential.

Loyalty: The relationship between experience and loyalty has been addressed in service marketing literature (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016 ; Klaus & Maklan, 2013).According toNaylor et al. (2008)and Frow & Payne (2007) delivering high experience quality can be an opportunity of having loyal customers.Results obtained by Bustamante & Rubio (2017) and Klaus & Maklan (2013), establish the causal relationship between customer experience service and loyalty.

Conclusion, Implications, and Future Line of Action

With the adoption of online platform of retail shopping the next task in front of research firms and marketers is what online consumers want. With the increased level of competition and the awareness level of the consumers e-retailers are looking forward to attract more and more customers and trying to make their shopping experience hassle free and memorable. However, it is still an unresolved riddle that what will leave a wow expression on the face of a customer. In literature till now much attention has been provided to customer experience in the context of traditional or offline retailing.

The research applicable on offline medium of retailing cannot be fully implied on online shopping due to its distinct features. However, some studies on online consumer experience gave some insight about different dimensions of customer service experience in e-retailing. Still more research is needed in the online retailing sector to understand the shapers or contributors of customer service experience. In terms of contribution to the literature, first the present paper suggested a conceptual model (using holistic approach) depicting the determinants and outcomes of customer service experiences in online retailing and secondly an instrument has been proposed to measure customer experience service and its effects (appendix 1).

The paper defined three drivers namely website quality (sub grouped into four dimensions namely ease of use, information quality, design, and privacy), value for money, and customer support. Satisfaction, trust, and loyalty are the three effects of customer service experience reported in the study. Online retailing is emerging as a significant managerial challenge not only to dedicated e-retailer but for multichannel retailers also. Marketers can empirically test the suggested model for their website and validate the work conceptualized in the present paper. Since customer service experience is contextual in nature, the conceptual model of determinants and outcomes of experience quality for other industries can also be developed.

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Appendix 1: Measurement Scales

CONSTRUCT	Scale Reference	Adapted Scale
Ease of Use	Yang et al., 2004	• Using the company's Website requires a lot of effort. • The organization and structure of online content is easy to follow • It is easy for me to complete a transaction through the company's website.
Information Quality	Bressolles et al., 2007	• The website provides in -depth information about the product or service proposed. • The site provides relevant information. • The site provides accurate information.
Design	Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003	• The website's appearance is professional. • The website is visually appealing. • Buying at this website is exciting. • The website has innovative features.
Privacy/Security	Yang et al., 2004	• The retailer will not misuse my personal information. • I feel safe in my online transactions. • I feel secure in providing sensitive information.
Value for Money	Lemke et al., 2011	• The discounts are available on website. • There is availability of loyalty incentives. • Do you feel that website exceeds expectations without charge? • Do you feel that website provides value for money?
Customer Service	Wang et al., 2001	• I feel satisfied with the customer support provided by the website. • I feel satisfied with the after -sale service provided by the website. • The website understands my problems and requests. • The website responds my requests fast enough.
Goals	Arnold & Reynolds, 2003	• To me, shopping is an adventure. • For the most of the part, I go shopping when there are promotional discounts. • I do shopping to keep up with the trends. • I do shopping when I am in a down mood.
Web-specific Self Efficacy	Hsu & Chiu, 2004	• I feel confident in surfing/shopping through the website. • I feel confident while visiting the website by entering its address in the browser. • I feel confident while navigating the website while following the hyperlinks. • I feel confident while downloading the pages containing information about the products and services on the website.
Satisfaction	Lin & Bannett, 2014, Shankar et al. (2003), Khalifa & Vanessa (2007)	• Ì am satisfied with my overall experiences of Internet shopping from this website. • I am satisfied with the pre -purchase experience of this Internet shopping website (e.g. consumer education, product search, quality of information about products, product comparison). • I am satisfied with the purchase experience of this Internet shopping website. • I am satisfied with the post -purchase experience of this Internet shopping website (e.g. customer support and after sales support, handling of returns/refunds, delivery care). • Shopping at this site has been an enjoyable experience.
Trust	Jarvenpaa et al.,1999	• Internet shopping is reliable. • In general, I can rely on Internet vendors to keep the promise that they make. • Internet shopping can be trusted, there are no uncertainties. • Internet shopping is a trustworthy experience.
Loyalty	Fernandes & Cruz, 2016	• I consider this website as my first choice among websites. • I would recommend this Internet shopping website. • I would consider visiting this website again in the next few days.