



Toward a conceptualization of the online shopping experience



Aurélia Michaud Trevinal ^{a,*}, Thomas Stenger ^{b,1}

^a University Institute of Technology, University of La Rochelle, 15 rue F. de Vaux de Foletier, Lab. CEREGE, EA-1722, 17 000 La Rochelle, France

^b Institute of Business and Management (IAE), University of Poitiers, 20, rue Guillaume VII le Troubadour, Lab. CEREGE, EA-1722, BP 639-86022 Poitiers Cedex, France

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 June 2013

Received in revised form

24 January 2014

Accepted 20 February 2014

Available online 20 March 2014

Keywords:

Shopping

Experience

Online

Consumption

Appropriation

Facebook

ABSTRACT

This research article explores the content of consumers' experience when they shop online and proposes a first step in conceptualizing the 'online shopping experience' (OSE). First, we carried out an extended literature review and proposed an integrative conceptual framework. Then, we relied on a consumers discourse analysis with four focus groups with consumers who differ in terms of age, gender and online shopping experience.

We define the OSE and propose a conceptualization through four core dimensions: the physical, ideological, pragmatic and social dimensions. Connections are established between the flow concept and the 'traditional' dimensions of experience, and specific shopping values are identified. Moreover, an appropriation process of commercial websites is revealed; beyond purchase intentions and rituals, the OSE is embodied by the use of online tools and patronage routines. Finally, social interactions with Facebook friends are one of the new practices considered.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction: what is the content of consumers' experience when they shop online?

The nature of consumption experience is established as the interaction in a situation – in a place and during a period of time – between an individual and an object (Arnould and Thomson, 2005). A four-stage process has been proposed to represent the customer experience (Arnould et al., 2004), which distinguishes the core of the experience from the anticipated experience and from the purchase itself, in addition to differentiate it from memories and nostalgia. The shopping experience is all-encompassing (Arnould et al., 2004); consumers may experience it in many ways that depend on the social context, on the products and services for which they are shopping and on the personal relationships that help form the situation (Edgell et al., 1997).

Considering the amount of literature dedicated to consumption experience, shopping experience and the latest development in e-marketing and e-tailing, this paper seeks to improve our understanding of shopping experience in the online context. A holistic empirical examination of the experience concept is also proposed.

Some approaches focus on isolated elements such as brand (Brakus et al., 2009) or in-store experience (Arnold et al., 2005). The shopping experience has been studied in retailing research with a focus on a 'recreative' type of consumer and on the enjoyment derived from shopping (Bäckström, 2011); the shopping experiences should be either cultural (as in a museum) or "spectacular" at Nike Town (Carù and Cova, 2007). A few specific online experiences have been investigated, like those in services (Jüttner et al., 2013) or in online communities (Nambisan and Watt, 2011). Extended research has provided considerable evidence that help to characterize the flow experience (Hoffman and Novak, 2000, 2009), or to identify antecedents and outcomes of online experiences (Rose et al., 2012).

This research does not address the antecedents or outcomes of online shopping experience (OSE); this study rather focuses on the conceptualization of the OSE itself, that is to say, on what comprises the entire OSE. Online consumer experience encompasses much more than e-purchase experience or the positive experience created by the e-tailer.

Are the varied aspects and concepts of consumption and shopping maintained in the online context? Are they sufficient to describe the OSE?

The purpose of this research is to expand and deepen the present state of the art of the OSE. The main objectives of the research are to:

- (1) Identify the dimensions and components of the OSE.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +33 5 46 51 39 57; fax: +33 5 46 51 39 18.

E-mail addresses: amichaud@univ-lr.fr (A. Michaud Trevinal),

stenger@iae.univ-poitiers.fr (T. Stenger).

URLs: <http://aureliamichaud.wordpress.com/> (A. Michaud Trevinal),

<http://thomasstenger.kiubi-web.com/> (T. Stenger).

¹ Tel.: +33 5 49 45 44 99.

- (2) Develop a comprehensive theoretical framework of OSE that incorporates OSE component variables based on pre-existing theory of consumption, shopping and online experience.

Therefore, this paper raises the following questions: What is the content of the specific experience lived during the OSEs? What do consumers experience when they shop online?

By pursuing these objectives, this paper makes several contributions to the e-marketing and retailing literature that both brings new knowledge and extends existing knowledge, developing a conceptualization of OSE not to be found in the literature.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we will review the literature about the consumption and shopping experiences as well as online experience. Second, we will consider how these elements could fit with the online context by designing a conceptual framework; we shall also present the data collection and data analysis procedures. Third, we will consider the four core dimensions of the OSEs and discuss their specific components and characteristics. Fourth, we will conclude and offer directions for future research.

2. Literature review: consumption, shopping and online experience

2.1. Consumption experience

The consumption experience extends beyond the consumption of products and services to encompass the consumption of events – baseball games, movies, rafting, etc. (Woodward and Holbrook, 2013). This may explain why the literature on consumption experience includes interpretative research on full-blown experience as well as the customer experience.

2.1.1. A psychological dimension: cognitive and affective aspects of the experience

The customer experience is conceptualized as a psychological construct composed of cognitive and affective aspects (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Dubé and LeBel, 2003; Gentile et al., 2007; Brakus et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009; Jüttner et al., 2013). Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) groundbreaking research has examined the subjective dimension of consuming and the consumption experience as a psychological phenomenon. Their work emphasizes the emotional state taking place during the consumption process. Along with others components, the cognition and emotion-related components of the consumption experience have been identified as influential components of the formation process of the customer experience.²

2.1.2. A physical and sensorial dimensions

Nevertheless, the physical dimension, – in other words, the aspects of consumer behavior related to the multisensory side of the consumer experience – predominates (Addis and Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Indeed, the literature contends that the consumption experience is composed of a physical dimension related to physical participation in the environment and the specific relationship the individual is committed to (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). This dimension forms the tangible base of the experience. The experience is multi-sensory; an individual may see, touch, smell, taste, and feel the consumption object (Heilbrunn, 2010). The experience occurs in space and time;

the consumer may choose, hesitate, reject and use the object. For Carù and Cova (2007), the core elements in the consumption experience are time pressure and the duration of experience. However, time is not reflected in the work of other scholars, whereas elements of place are cited. Indeed, along with the cognitive and affective components discussed previously, Verhoef et al. (2009) suggest that the customer experience is a physical nature. Their model suggests that the determinants of the customer experience include the social environment, service interface, the retail atmosphere, and range of products price. They state that the situation of CE (type of store, location) can moderate the overall CE.

2.1.3. Values and rituals: the symbolic dimension of consumption

The consumption experience promotes values and an imaginary world (Holbrook, 2000). Through consumption, consumers acquire and manipulate object meanings (Holt, 1995). The numerous processes of integration and classification that were synthesized in Holt's research (1995) underline the symbolic dimension of consumption.

These processes may be the search for identity and self-image (Firat and Dholakia, 1998). They may be producing or personalizing processes like rituals (Holt, 1995). There are numerous rituals in the consumer's everyday life that are but a few examples of the many consumption experiences (Rook, 1985; McCracken's, 1986). Rituals are actions and interactions characterized by a sequential process that is regularly repeated and that may have a symbolic dimension. In addition, there may be a sacralizing process in consumption (Belk et al., 1989). For instance, certain rituals are linked to the consumer's culture (Christmas, birthday, etc.) and may be considered as scripts for an experience that is socially accepted (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991). Therefore, in rituals – be they daily or irregular, extra-ordinary or ordinary ones – individuals save time and communicate values to other people (Goffman, 1974).

2.1.4. Consumption as a pragmatic experience

Previous research on consumption has also considered the practices of consumers as being part of the experience. Indeed, like the various practices listed by Holt (1995) during a baseball game, the experience may be defined by a precise set of acts and gestures by which consumers make the consumption object their own (Heilbrunn, 2010).

The acts that are realized during the experience underline the role of the consumer in the experience or in the co-production of the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999). Thus, consumer behavior reveals more than a functional use of products and services; behaviors are the expression of the appropriation of the environment by the consumer (Fischer, 1997). In the case of bank services, for example, the consumer can create new meanings and unusual functions while experiencing service that might increase the chances of improving service management (Aubert-Gamet, 1997). In their research on brand experiences, Brakus et al. (2009) have distinguished a behavioral response to stimuli. Such actions and bodily experiences are key elements of the experience. Gentile et al. (2007) have also added a pragmatic component in their empirical research with actual brands (i.e. experiences resulting from the practical act of doing something and usability). They did not, however, empirically test the model.

The theoretical perspective of environmental sociology considers the individual as no longer reactive; s/he becomes a co-producer of the environment. The self-sufficient individual is free to test and tamper with the available elements (De Certeau, 1984). The individual is intent on participating in the experience, extra-ordinary or not, because s/he wants to be part of the experimentation

² In the literature, the stimuli processed through thoughts and reasoning are referred to as "cognitive", "functional stimuli" (Berry et al., 2002), "rational" or "intellectual" (Brakus et al., 2009).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1029064>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1029064>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)