

**SHOPPING CART EXPERIENCE – BUILDING
CONSUMER EXPERIENCE AT THE CHECK- OUT STAGE
FOR ONLINE BUYING**

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ABSTRACT

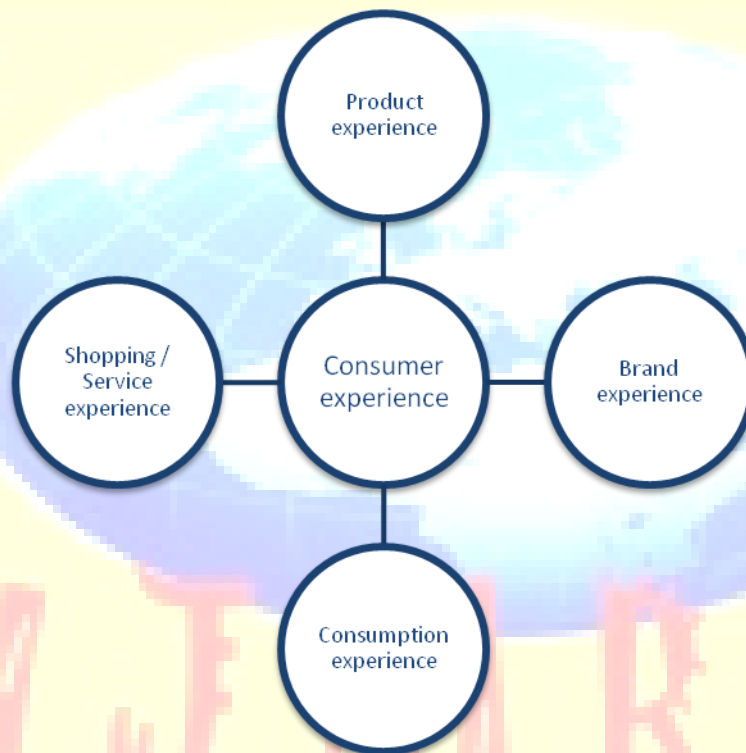
Free and discounted shopping is growing in preference among the Indian customers. The preference for online shopping sites are based on several factors ranging from deals, seasonal exclusives, exclusive online sales, discounts, offers, freebies, varieties, bundled product, etc. there is a growing priority for shopping cart and check out conveniences. The choice for going online for shopping is to gain the convenience experience where the customer need not have to spent time, money and effort in travelling, searching , purchasing, carrying the goods back to home and so on. The greatest advantage, beyond the factors mentioned as factors influencing a customer to go online shopping, is to make comparison for the products under consideration. The shopper also visits meta-sites that provide collective information on availability, price and discounted offers, thus deciding on the online shopping site to rely at the end of the decision making. Most cases results in selecting multiple sites to compare and contrast the shopping cart. As far as an online shopping is concerned the most important point where the real conversion has to happen is the shopping cart finalization stage. Possibility of a high cognitive dissonance may occur during the finalization phase and which may lead to disconnect experience. This stage thus invites attention for the online retailers where the full form of consumer experience matters

Keywords : Online shopping, comparison shopping, shopping cart experience , cognitive dissonance, disconnect experience

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Consumer and marketing research has shown that experiences occur when consumers search for products, when they shop for them, when they receive service and when they consume them. (Arnould, 2002) (Brakus J Josko, 2008) (Holbrook, 2000) This traditional view on consumer experience describes it containing the space where the consumer search for products, shop for them, when they receive service and while they consume the product carries narrow application while the experience extends much beyond this scope. Based on most popularly cited studies the experience framework could hold the product related experience, shopping and service experience , consumption experience and brand experience.



Shopping and service experience

Shopping and service experience occurs when a customer interacts with a store's physical environment, its personnel, its policies and practices This establishes the influence of atmospheric variable and sales people on the customer experiences. (Kerin, 1992). Online retail carries a very different scenario as far as the offline shopping is concerned. Hence the need to analyse the factors that play vital role over the online purchase behavior becomes relevant. Shopping and service experience online is impacted by factors like , convenience, information, less cost more benefit , possibility for variety seek, price comparison, offers discounts and deals

comparison, entertainment effect etc. Online business caters to online shopping and servicing experience with utmost care as the customers switching behavior is faster and the chances for cognitive dissonance and the chances of disconnect, thereby, is higher.

The greatest benefit an online consumer is enchanted with is the comparison shopping. Comparison shopping offline is time consuming, costly, tiring and expensive compared to shopping online when you are sure of what to buy or otherwise.

Comparison Shopping

The choice for going online for shopping is to gain the convenience experience where the customer need not have to spent time, money and effort in travelling, searching , purchasing, carrying the goods back to home and so on. The greatest advantage, beyond the factors mentioned as factors influencing a customer to go online shopping, is to make comparison for the products under consideration. The general practice of seeing whether a better option or alternative is available is part of every customers habit. The educated customer is also educated about the need to check online before going for an offline purchase as this gives the idea of the minimum price at which the negotiation with the seller be made. It is evident from the fact that the customer who prefers to buy a product is concentrating on the product aspect first irrespective of the brand endorsing the product and searches for all the brands available . the next priority will be to check for the price aspect and narrow down on the familiar brands in relation to the price factor, then the comparison shopping is lead to compare the discounts available along with freebies and offers on the branded product alternatives chosen. This will reduce the total set to a fairly preference set of products which are branded. This will be made as quick as possible because of the filters available. Thus the customer arrives at a preference set with branded products much of which is a usual brand, some will be new brands, some will be exclusive online brands, some will be not familiar brands that labels the product. Most cases will see these steps of alternative evaluation as a routine task and statistics shows that most customers who shop online subconsciously does these comparison.

The greatest advantage for the shopper is to see all the alternative online sites available from where similar purchases can be made. The shopper also visits meta-sites that provide collective information on availability, price and discounted offers, thus deciding on the online shopping site to rely at the end of the decision making. Most cases results in selecting multiple sites to compare and contrast the shopping cart.

Shopping-cart experience

The final shopping cart experience is advanced in nature compared to the selection of preferred products from the total set. Here the customer enters the shopping card at the end of the shopping tunnel and further compares the products within. At his stage customers have chosen all the products that is in the preference list and is at the stage of further comparing the benefit versus cost. The shopping cart provides an opportunity for the online shopper to cumulate the charges in toto to see the effectiveness of buying. Smart consumers are also aware of the alternative offline purchase benefits available in the same shopping cart. This is a challenge for online retailers and metamediaries at present. This shopping cart experience is unique to each customer. When taking into consideration an experience online buyer is familiar with the touchpoints to verify and identifies the original cost for the purchases. Shopping cart lists the cost of products purchased item-wise and the total is presented along with the shipping charges that adds to the total product price. This escalates the cost to the shopper. Then the next step as far as the shopper is concerned will be towards comparing the shipping price with other online sites for the same shopping cart.

When comparison shopping, consumers take product price and shipping charges almost equally into consideration. The resulting purchase decision may then be that the shopper chooses to buy from a retailer who offers free or discounted shipping if the total price including shipping is less than that of other retailer having the same items . Product price and shipping charges were rated as the most important factors in comparison shopping. Shipping speed, consumer reviews, retailer reputation, and delivery time flexibility are all taken into account by consumers when comparison shopping, but at a lower rate than product price and shipping charges. Study shows that 80% of online shoppers have placed items in the shopping cart and left the site without making a purchase. This represents a huge lost opportunity for retailers. Among the shoppers that have abandoned their shopping cart, shipping costs were the reason cited most often. (ComScore , 2012) . Consumer who figure out most profitable purchase option will continue to chose the best shopping cart available.

Shopping cart to check-out

As far as an online shopping is concerned the most important point where the real conversion has to happen is the shopping cart finalization stage. Possibility of a high cognitive dissonance may occur during the finalization phase and which may lead to disconnect experience. This stage thus invites attention for the online retailers where the full form of consumer experience matters. The strategies for the final conversion must be in full throttle while a consumer has attempted to land in the shopping cart stage during his online shopping. Consumer remain highly satisfied if at this stage they are conveniently able to exercise option to make the final choice of the items in the shopping cart. This could be possible only if they could identify that there are convenient choice of shipping options. Consumers are willing to pay marginal amounts for faster shipping options, if available. Those customers who have taken pain and time for shopping online would want their purchased items as soon as possible and hence may require a faster delivery plan available to be opted in the shopping cart stage during check out. Further to this while they chose the shipping and delivery plan they may also search for the returns policy of the servicing online retailer. The easiness in understanding the returns policy is also a motivator that may lead a shopping cart to final buy. The online retailer must provide the returns policy in such a manner that it is easy for the customer to make the final decision.

A shopping return experience may include a return label right on the box, easy to fill return labels (preferably printed on behalf of the customer with options to fill the necessary information like return date, quantity etc.), online refund , an easy to follow procedure (animated or videoed for easy understanding than written down policy alone, which is cumbersome to read and understand) , facility to ship the return with ease back to the retailer . Some online retailers who promise to customers that they will provide return help if not satisfied preemptively claiming a chance to reduce the cognitive dissonance of the online shopper. The equation with which a customer shops on an online site is by balancing the shopping experience with the possible return experience, if a need arises. Thus it could be understood that return policy adds value to the shopping experience of an online shopper.

Conclusion

Free and discounted shopping is growing in preference among the Indian customers. The preference for online shopping sites are based on several factors ranging from deals, seasonal exclusives, exclusive online sales, discounts, offers, freebies, varieties, bundled product, etc. there is a growing priority for shopping cart and check out conveniences.

In fact, many shoppers are willing to pay a nominal fee to receive the product faster if given the option. Shipping and delivery timing is important during check-out . To reduce shopping cart abandonment, retailers should show the shipping costs, show the level of total purchase that could fetch them free shipping, and give consumers the option of choosing their preferred shipping time lag. Shipping time frames should be optional for the customers to chose while they are at the shopping cart level. . Customers are willing to wait for their packages they want estimated delivery time clearly stated and they want e-mail or text alerts about their delivery. Finally, good experiences with returning items leads to repeat customers and recommendations for the retailer. Good returns experiences are marked by ease for the consumer, while the bad experiences highlight hassles and the extra cost required.

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