

Managing online customer experience of pre and post-impulse purchase during Covid 19 pandemic

Dr. Yan Liang, Sid Ghosh Bournemouth University

Introduction

Covid-19 has disrupted the way consumers buy products and services causing unprecedented change to consumer's routines. Consumers have been confined to their homes and have had to adopt the Internet as their sole provider of communication, entertainment and a provider of their wants and needs. This new lifestyle has the power to change consumer behaviour. With lockdown restrictions, consumers are relied on online shopping because they are unable to go into a retail setting, thus online consumption has exponentially risen.

Literature review

Recent studies point out the pandemic leads to more impulse purchase online (Tahir et al., 2020; Addo et al., 2020; Akhtar et al., 2020), as impulse purchase behaviour occurs when consumers experience an expected, intense, and continual impulse to buy something immediately (Rook, 1987). Prior to the Covid 19 phenomenon, literature suggested that customers' impulsive purchase behaviour was an outcome of marketing efforts, such as low prices, huge discounts, mass advertisements, rebates, and positioning of products within the store (Chen and Wang, 2016; Mohan and Sharma, 2013; Kacen and Lee, 2002; Amos et al., 2014). However, since the spreading of the Coronavirus, researchers reveal that impulsive purchase behaviour could occur without marketing efforts (Reference needed). Consumers are influenced by anxious, limited supply, scarcity of products, fear price increase, perceived unavailability, peer influence, insecurity and even affected by rumours and disinformation (Naeem 2020; Sim et al., 2020; Lins and Aquino, 2020).

Under such intensive emotions, purchasing online could make customers feel even frustrated and worried about purchased products that may not work, items perhaps may not arrive on expected date, their billing might be wrong, they may regret their purchase and would demand exchange or refund. As Telci et al. (2011) stated that consumers who purchases online impulsively tends to experience post-purchase dissonance, which is caused by post-purchase anxiety of possible unexpected consequences. Thus, creating a frictionless customer experience is becoming a harder task for companies in extraordinary times, retails have to manage customer experiences and design strategies to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Research gap

Majority recent studies focus on antecedents of impulse purchase in the context of Covid 19 (Naeem 2020; Ahmed et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2021), but limited studies discuss Consumers' post impulse purchase emotions and experience during the pandemic. Thus, this research attempts to address the gap in online impulse purchase literature with regards to examine the pre and post-impulse purchase experience and behaviours and their impact on future impulse purchase during uncertain times, and also to answer the research question on what lessons can be learnt by the marketers to adapt to changes in buying behaviours and be well prepared to face future uncertainties.

Research Aim

It has been argued that purchases online impulsively tends to experience post-purchase dissonance (Telci et al. ,2011), therefore, brands need explore on how to create a frictionless online customer experiences during Covid 19 pandemic. A research from Fontanella (2020) shows that customers are twice as likely to share reviews after a negative experience with brands than they are after a positive experience. Thus, during the pandemic impulse purchase, it is essential that brands know how to prevent resolving a service issue during first interaction with the customer and remove friction from the service experience to improve customer satisfied and loyal. Thus, this research aims to help brands to understand how to manage online customer experience of pre and post-impulse purchase during Covid 19 pandemic.

Proposed method

This paper is under development stage, authors chose to conduct a mixed method research to gain a further understanding of both customers and brands perspective on frictionless online customer experiences during Covid 19 pandemic, and to understand the influential factors that impact on online shopping experience of pre and post-impulse purchase. The targeted respondents will be based in the UK, collected data will be analysed by using NVivo and Structural Equation Modeling.



Research contributions

The findings of this research will provide marketers important insights for maximizing customer experience by adjusting their processes to the consumer's habits and behaviour to provide pleasant experiences. The results will help the retailers to develop effective strategies that may be helpful of dealing with impulse buying during uncertain times and fearful environment.



Photos resources from Google

References

- Addo, P. C., Jaming, F., Kalbo, N. B., & Liangqiang, L. (2020). COVID-19: Fear appeal favoring purchase behavior towards personal protective equipment. *The Service Industries Journal*, 40 (7-8), 471-490.
- Ahmed, R. R., Streimikiene, D., Rolfe, J.-A., & Due, P. A. (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Antecedents for the Impulse Buying Behavior of US Citizens. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 12(3), 5-27.
- Akhtar, Nadeem, M. Akhtar, Usman, M. Ali, M., Iqbal Siddiqui U., (2020). COVID-19 restrictions and consumers' psychological reactance toward offline shopping freedom restoration. *The Service Industry Journal*, 40, pp. 891-913.
- Amos, C., Holmes, G. R., Kenson, W.C. (2014). A meta-analysis of consumer impulse buyin. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21, pp. 86-97.
- Chen, Y.F. and Wang, R.Y. (2016). "Are humans rational? Exploring factors influencing impulse buying intention and continuous impulse buying intention". *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 186-197.
- Fontanella, C. (2020). What Does It Mean to Offer a Frictionless Customer Experience? Available from: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/frictionless-customer-experience> (Accessed on 10/02/2021)
- Kacen, J.J. and Lee, J.A. (2002). The influence of culture on consumer impulsive buying behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 163-176.
- Lins, S., and Aquino, S. (2020). Development and initial psychometric properties of a panic buying scale during COVID-19 pandemic. *Heliyon*, 6(9).
- Mohan, G., Sivakumaran, B. and Sharma, P. (2013). Impact of store environment on impulse buying behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47 No. 10, pp. 1711-1732.
- Naeem, M. (2020). Understanding the customer psychology of impulse buying during COVID-19 pandemic: implications for retailers. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Volume 49 Issue 3
- Putri, A. M., Reisan, A., Andika, H. Hendriana, E. (2021). Antecedents of panic buying behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Management Science Letters*, [s. l.], p. 1821-1832
- Rook, D.W. (1987). The buying impulse. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 189-199.
- Sim, K., Chau, H. C., Vieta, E., & Fernandez, G. (2020). The anatomy of panic buying related to the current, COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychiatry Research*, 288, e113015.
- Tahir I., Abdu H.P., Vikas A, Ying W, Naeem A, Shajast M, Liang X, (2020). Panic buying in the COVID-19 pandemic: A multi-country examination. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Volume 59.
- Telci, E. Eser, Ceyda Maden, and Deniz Kantur. (2011). The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: A Marketing and Management Perspective. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 24, pp 378-86.
- Wold, S. (2020). How Covid-19 has changed shopper behaviour. Available from: <https://www.marketingweek.com/how-covid-19-has-changed-shopper-behaviour/> (Accessed on 12/02/2021)