



The Role of Touchpoints in Shaping the Customer Experience throughout the Customer Journey

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Abstract

Purpose: Customer journeys in today's markets are "multitouch" and multichannel. Thus, the significance of studying customer journeys reflects the need to understand how the customer goes in an ongoing cycle of experience through dealing with the different touchpoints. The paper aims to understand the connectivity between how the touchpoints shape the customer experience and how it evolves throughout the customer journey from pre-purchase to purchase to post-purchase. The objective of the paper is understanding how the customer experience is shaped in multiple touchpoints, online and offline; in other words, brand-owned and social/external touchpoints.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study is generated using qualitative approach using interviews to investigate customers who purchase from high-street fashion stores in Egypt; the study focused on five stores which are: Zara, Mango, Pull and Bear, Bershka and Stradivarius. The data were collected from conducting twenty-five interviewees. The twenty-five interviews were digitally recorded and then fully transcribed. All the interviewees were informed about the confidentiality, anonymity of their identity. After a certain point, interviews reached semantic saturation in the data collection process where no or little new information was added (Gummesson, 2005). The interviewees were delivering no new themes regarding the study, and that emerged between the twenty and twenty-two interviews, in a total of twenty-five interviews.

Findings: The finding reveals that there is empirical evidence to support the idea that touchpoints shape the whole customer experience in the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stage.

Keywords: Customer Experience, Touchpoints and Customer Journey.

1. Introduction

After the 2008 financial crisis, all the world markets were affected, especially economic factors. Factors such as gasoline prices, inflation, recession, unemployment, interest rates, and declining stock markets all influenced customer shopping behavior. Customers became more knowledgeable and demanding more than just low prices and innovative products. All the previously mentioned lead firms to center their attention on the importance of improving the whole customer experience to survive in these competitive markets (Grewal et al., 2009). consumer demands more than just competent service, they are seeking experiences, which are "engaging, robust, compelling and memorable" (Gilmore and Pine 2002, p. 10). Hence, customer experience is now core in the managers' and executives' strategies, whether in consumer-packaged goods or retail fields (Grewal et al., 2009). Moreover, monitoring the customer journey and creating a durable and robust customer experience is becoming a leading management objective, where providing a superior customer experience has been cited as the top priority of 72% of businesses (Kranzbühler et al. 2019).

1.1 Research Problem

Customer journeys in today's markets are "multitouch" and multichannel, with new types of stimuli appearing every day, implying that firms need to comprehend a wide range of touchpoints within and outside firm control, both in offline and online settings (Becker et al., 2020; Verhoef et al., 2016). Furthermore, empowered customers are increasingly in charge of choosing unique ways to achieve their goals (Edelman et al., 2015). The research aims to understand this problem, how the brand-owned touchpoints and social/external touchpoints influence the customer experience in the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stage.

1.2 Research Objective

Customer journeys have become increasingly complex and individualized; the extant literature has tended to measure customer experience in one touchpoint (Becker et al., 2020). However, the paper objective is to understand how the Brand-owned touchpoints influence the customer experience. The second objective of the study is to understand how the social/external touchpoints influence the customer experience.

1.3 Research Gap

Customer experience is still a new concept that needs more academic attention (Verhoef et al. 2016). Recent evidence suggests significant differences in studies in terms of perspective, research context, and research gaps identified (Waqas et al., 2021). More precisely, current literature lacks the understanding of customer experience regarding customers' practice of attaching meanings to their experiences. Moreover, previous studies researched only one touchpoint. This study aims to fill this gap in which it researches two types of touchpoints online and offline and how they influence the customer experience. Therefore, this paper seeks to understand how the customer relates meanings to their experiences with the firm's touchpoints, highlight the findings and offer a new perspective on the customer experience.

2. Literature review

2.1 Customer Experience

Marketing literature has developed over time from customer buying behavior models (1960s-1970s), customer satisfaction and loyalty (1970s), service quality (1980s), relationship marketing (1990s), customer relationship management (2000s), customer centricity, and customer focus (2000s-2010s) until nowadays the evolution of the so-called "Customer experience." Back in the 1980s, the traditional marketing literature had always considered the customer as a rational decision-maker. Later on, in the mid-1980s, experiential theorists broadened the view of human behavior. Human behavior is much more complicated as it involves the importance of the emotional aspects of experiences (Thompson et al., 1989). This new approach viewed customer behavior by taking into consideration different aspects of decision-making and experience. These aspects refer to customer behavior's irrational and emotional side for the whole experience resulting from the interactions between the firm and customers (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

The current business practice has broadly defined the customer experience, involving every aspect of a company's offering- the quality of customer care and advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability. In other words, it is the customer's internal and subjective response to any direct or indirect contact with an organization (Meyer and Schwager 2007, p. 2). Direct

contact most probably happens in the purchase, use, and service, which the customer usually initiates. Indirect contact includes unplanned encounters with company representatives such as word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms, advertising, reviews (Meyer and Schwager 2007, p. 2). The customer experience is a holistic, dynamic process and multidimensional construct. It focuses on the customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings from pre-purchase to purchase to post-purchase (Verhoef et al., 2016). Customer experience happens every time a customer touches the firm along his/her journey, which is known as a touchpoint (Verhoef et al. 2016).

2.2 Customer Journey

The term “Journey” alone can be viewed as one of the basic metaphors that is used by customers to describe, understand their lives and to make meaning of their past, present and future (Zaltman and Zaltman 2008). The journey metaphor results from various settings and is related to a variety of experiences. Journeys can be characterized by being short or long, have unexpected events, go towards or away from something, be repeated many times and includes barriers (Hamilton et al. 2019). A customer journey can be defined as a process that involves a series of firm-customer touchpoints that the consumer identifies as satisfying, dissatisfying or neutral (Kranzbühler et al. 2019). Customer experience is conceptualized as a customer’s “journey” with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touch points (Verhoef et al. 2016). “Touchpoint” can be noted as any verbal (e.g., advertising) or non-verbal (e.g., product usage) incident that a consumer perceives and relates to a firm (Duncan and Moriarty, 2006). A concrete understanding and definition of the customer journey is that it relates to all activities and touchpoints between consumers and firms, starting from consideration, search to purchase and post purchase (Anderl et al. 2016; Shankar et al. 2011). The whole customer journey is a crucial aspect in evaluating the customer experience where it reflects the feasibility or ease of living through plentiful touch points (Homburg et al. 2019). The reason for that is that customers find value in the cumulative perception of the touch points throughout the whole customer journey from pre-purchase to purchase to post-purchase (Lemke et al. 2011; Tax et al. 2013).

2.3 Phases in the Customer Journey

1. Pre-purchase

It is the first stage that involves the customer communication and entire experience before purchasing. The marketing literature defines this stage as one that describes behavior such as need recognition and consideration. However, this stage involves the customer experience from the beginning of the need recognition to goals being satisfied with a purchase (e.g., Hoyer 1984; Pieters, Baumgartner, and Allen 1995).

2. Purchase

The second stage involves the dealings of customer with the firm and its environment during the purchase stage itself. It is characterized by behaviors such as ordering, payment and choice, which make this stage one of the most important ones (Verhoef et al. 2016).

3. Post-purchase

The third stage involves the dealings of customers with the firm and its environment after the purchase. It encompasses behaviors such as usage and consumption, post purchase engagement and service requests. Research on this third stage has concentrated on the consumption experience (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman 1982); service recovery (e.g., Kelley and Davis 1994); and decisions to return products (e.g., Wood 2001), repurchase (e.g., Bolton 1998), or seek variety (e.g., McAlister and Pessemier 1982), as well as other non-purchase behaviors such as word of mouth and other forms of customer engagement (e.g., Van Doorn et al. 2010).

2.4 Touchpoints in the Customer Journey

The paper aims to understand the customer experience every time the customer deals with the firms' touch points. Previous studies reflected that a customer's experience is the combination of all cues and touchpoints a customer has with a firm, which in turn creates an overall experience (Homburg et al., 2017; Mclean et al., 2016; Payne et al., 2008). Homburg et al. (2017, p.386) continued from Verhoef et al. (2009) and suggest that 'the customer experience is the evolvement of a person's sensorial, affective, cognitive, relational and behavioral responses to a brand by living through a journey of touchpoints along pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase and continually judging this journey against response thresholds of co-occurring experiences. Homburg et al., (2017) study goes is line

with Verhoef et al., (2016) who also viewed the customer experience as a construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey through touchpoints.

Touchpoint" can be defined as any verbal (e.g., advertising) or non-verbal (e.g., product usage) incident that a consumer perceives and relates to a firm (Duncan and Moriarty, 2006). In order to create a superior customer experience, a study by (Frow and Payne, 2008) stated that firms should focus on the careful management of touchpoints. Touchpoints reflect the moments when the customer interacts with or "touches" the offering (Patrício et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009). These contact points can be direct (e.g., physical service encounters) or indirect (e.g., advertising) and comprise various cues (Meyer and Schwager 2007). The customer search processes the so-called "Customer Journey involves a range of discrete encounters with plentiful touchpoints, such as advertisements and WOM. Based on this, a touchpoint can be defined as an episode of direct or indirect contact with the brand. Neslin et al. (2006, p. 96) define touchpoint as: "a customer contact point, or a medium through which the firm and the customer interact".

Verhoef et al. (2016) identified four categories of touchpoints which the customer deal throughout the whole journey and which varies according to the nature of the product/service or the customer own journey: Brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and social/external. Of interest to this study are Brand-owned and social/external that are explained next.

Brand-owned touch points. Brand owned touch points are defined as the customer interactions during the experience that are designed and managed by the firm and under the firm's control. They include all brand-owned media (e.g., advertising, websites, loyalty programs) and any brand-controlled elements of the marketing mix (e.g., attributes of product, packaging, service, price, convenience, sales force) (Verhoef et al., 2016). Recent studies by Baxendale et al. (2015) and Hanssens et al. (2014), has shown that advertising and promotion still influence customer preferences and attitudes. The effects of more direct brand touch points, such as loyalty programs have received considerable attention in the customer relationship management literature; this research has also considered the effects of these programs on customer attitudes (Venkatesan et al., 2004; Verhoef 2003).

Social/external touch points. This involves the impact of others on the customer experience such as other customers, peer influences, information sources such as review sites (e.g., Trip Advisor) and social media which has gained a lot of intention nowadays where it has changed the way people communicate (Verhoef et al. 2016). Based on that firms are setting up their own websites to have direct interaction and communication with their customers, hence influencing the customer experience. Social media is characterized by its timeliness and impact because of its viral speed of information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is an effective tool that can be used as a platform for firms to spread any kind of information such as a new offering by the firm, new ad .etc to a large number of consumers quickly. Customers on the social platform act as a key role in generating contents, creating superior customer experience and enduring value, and referring products, services, and brands to other customers (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014).

3. Research Methodology

The paper used interviews to gather the data. Therefore, this research adopts a qualitative design, to capture the complexity of the customer journey. This research took place in the Egyptian market. The researcher investigated Egyptian consumers, their perception of the touchpoints in the fashion industry, and how it shapes the whole customer experience. The sample of the interviewees was purposeful, looking for respondents that consume from the high street fashion stores in Egypt to make sure that they provide the researcher with the most useful information (Gummesson, 2005). Twenty-five interviewees were interviewed. Ten interviews were conducted face to face and fifteen interviews were conducted over the phone carried out in English and with an average duration of approximately thirty to thirty-five minutes. The twenty-five interviews were digitally recorded and then fully transcribed. After a certain point, interviews reached semantic saturation in the data collection process where no or little new information was added (Gummesson, 2005). The interviewees were delivering no new themes regarding the study, and that emerged between the twenty and twenty-two interviews, in a total of twenty-five interviews.

Data is analyzed using thematic analysis across the cases to interpret the meaning of the cases (Creswell 2007). The analysis of the interviews included a thematic approach that helps theorize across a number of cases. The researcher focused on crucial issues (or analysis of themes) to identify issues within each case and then look for common themes that transcend the cases (Yin, 2003). This analysis allowed stressing only the main themes, offering a reduced data format to examine and interpret. Themes were structured around patterns of information that organize and describe the data to derive the study's interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Keywords and verbatim quotations from interviewees supported thematic categories and the remaining data collected. The data was analyzed using NVivo. NVivo aids the researcher in analyzing and shaping the qualitative data (Creswell, 2007). Its streamlined aspect makes it easy to use. NVivo offers security by storing the database and files together in one file. It allows the researcher to employ the data and conduct searches. Additionally, it can display the codes and categories graphically (Creswell, 2007).

3.1 Data Collection Method

The following is the interview guide that the researcher used to collect the data. Data is analyzed using thematic analysis by using NVivo across the cases to interpret the meaning of the cases (Creswell 2007). The analysis of the interviews included a thematic approach that helps theorize across a number of cases.

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Table 1: The Interview Guide

Question	Question Objective
Tell me, what is your favorite store that you prefer to shop from the following high street fashion stores (Zara, H&M, Stradivarius, Pull and Bear, Mango).	
Pre-purchase Stage	
Question	Question Objective
1. When you decide to purchase from X, how do you usually start the whole process of purchasing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1a) How do you usually purchase (online, store)? • 1B) Why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ To understand how the touchpoints (Brand-owned touchpoints) shape the customer experience. ◇ To comprehend the complexity of the customer journey.
2. Before you purchase from X, what can influence your buying decisions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2A) What about your friends/family? Do you ask about their opinions? • 2B) Are there any influencers you check on social media before purchasing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ To understand how the social/external touchpoints influence the customer experience.
Purchase Stage	
Question	Question objective
3. During the purchase moment, how do you usually purchase (online, store) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3A) Why? • 3B) The moment you are buying, do you usually ask others for their opinion? (Friends and family for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ To understand the customer's whole purchasing journey; the perspective of the customer experience (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial and social responses). ◇ To understand how the brand-owned and social/external touchpoints shape the customer experience.

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Post-purchase stage	
Question	Question objective
<p>4. Tell me a good experience with X? How would it be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9A) Tell me a disappointing experience? What happened? How did you feel? 	<p>◇ To grasp the whole customer experience.</p>
<p>5. What is the last item that you recently purchased from X?</p> <p>Pre-purchase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5A) How did you start thinking about it? Did you check the website, instagram...? • 5B) Did you ask about others' opinions such as friends and family? <p>Purchase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5C) How did you purchase (Online, Store)? • 5D) Was anyone with you while you were buying? <p>Post-Purchase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5E) How satisfied are you? And how easy was it? • 5F) Tell me the feelings you experience after you purchased from X? Did you keep engaging with X? 	<p>◇ To grasp the whole customer journey /experience.</p>

3.2 Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development (research Model)

The following Figure (1) represents the conceptual model of the study. The following section explains the rationale behind the hypothesis formulation considering the relationships of the previously conveyed constructs: Customer experience and Brand-owned touchpoints and social touchpoints.

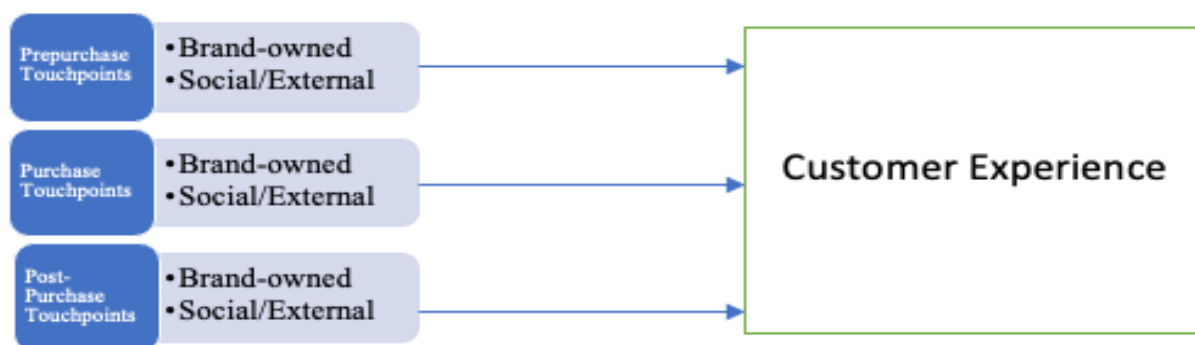


Figure1: Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis 1: Brand-owned touchpoints and social/external touchpoints influence customer experience in the pre-purchase stage.

Hypothesis 2: Brand-owned touchpoints and social/external touchpoints influence customer experience in the purchase stage.

Hypothesis 3: Brand-owned touchpoints and social/external touchpoints influence customer experience in the post-purchase stage.

4. Results

Previous studies focused mostly on a particular touchpoint. Yet, in the context of today's multitouch and multichannel markets, it is core to understand a broad range of touchpoints within and outside the firms' control, both offline, such as the physical store, and online such as website and mobile application. Thus, the study displayed how these multi-touchpoints shape the customer experience in the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase, presenting an integrative view. The study addressed two touchpoints: brand-owned and social/external touchpoints. First, brand-owned touchpoints include any brand-controlled

marketing mix elements such as product attributes, packaging, service, price, convenience, and employees (Verhoef et al., 2016). Second, social/external touchpoints are the impact of others on the customer experience, such as other customers, peer influences, information sources such as review sites (e.g., Trip Advisor), and social media (Verhoef et al. 2016).

4.1 Brand-owned Touchpoints Throughout the Customer Journey

The pre-purchase stage is the first stage that involves customer communication and the entire experience before purchasing (Verhoef et al., 2016). Researchers debated that customer experience is subjective and specific to the context. However, the current study formulates a view of how touchpoints shape the customer outcomes to experiences. Customers tend to highlight that the most crucial touchpoint in the pre-purchase stage is the mobile application. The mobile application allows the customers to easily check the variety of the products, the new collections in the market, and what the store can present to them. The research declared that customers continuously checking their mobile applications became a lifestyle routine. Moreover, customers tend to pass by the store regularly to see the collection, eventually, leading to an experience/purchase. The current study added to the literature that past experiences (pre-purchasing/purchasing) shape customers' future pre-purchasing and purchases experience. Yet, in the current research, it should be noted that purchasing decisions often blur the frontiers between stages of pre-purchase and purchase. The study indicated that eventually customers become attached emotionally to the store after several experiences with their favorite fashion store.

The purchase stage is the stage that the customer decides to purchase (Verhoef et al., 2016). At this stage, brand-owned touchpoints may involve the employees of the store. Customer interactions with employees are crucial, especially during in-store purchases. The current study showed that brand-owned touchpoints such as face-to-face interaction with employees and visiting the store emerge as particularly relevant in the purchase stage. Moreover, during the purchase stage, customers also encounter product attributes such as material, fitting, and quality that contribute to evaluating their experience at the touch point (Stein et al., 2016). Thus, by visiting and interacting with the store employees, consumers can touch the pieces and live their whole unique experience.

Concerning the post-purchase stage, brand-owned touch points are packaging, the price with good quality, convenience, and salesforce emerges as particularly relevant. Customers consider receiving the package on time; the correct items and accessible communication are crucial. The firms interact with customers through channels, including telephone, email, and online chat (Stein et al., 2016). The present study showed that in the post-purchase stage, the store could send an email or mobile message to ensure the online orders are received and the customers are satisfied. In the context of the current research, in the post-purchase stage, customers gain Value, which emerges from their feeling that the firm cares about their feedback.

Additionally, in the post-purchase stage, the current study reveals that customers look for accessible communication throughout all touchpoints. Customers always purchase risk-free because they know they will reach the preferred store easily through various channels such as digital touchpoints like the mobile application or physical touchpoints like going to the store. The current study contributes to knowledge by highlighting risk as a core dimension of value co-creation at this stage. For example, a risk-free purchase adds value to the whole experience, and value is co-created.

4.2 Social/External Touchpoints Throughout the Customer Journey

Social/external touchpoints are the impact of others on the customer experience, such as other customers, peer influences, information sources such as review sites (e.g., Trip Advisor), and social media platforms (Verhoef et al. 2016). The study indicated that in the pre-purchase stage, those peer influences are the customers' friends/family who shape the customer experience and ask for their opinion when they check the website or mobile application. Furthermore, the current research added to the knowledge that social media platforms as a social/ external touchpoint in the pre-purchase stage emerge relevant in shaping the customer experience. The research added that these social/external touchpoints, i.e., social media platforms, lead to the blurry stage between pre-purchase and purchase. Eventually, in this pre-purchase stage, customers decide they will go to the store and try on a new look that may lead them to a purchasing experience.

The study added to the knowledge that customers considered Instagram as a primary platform in which they can check for new outfit ideas. The study showed the importance of the bloggers in the customer's inspiration for outfits. Customers check those bloggers as they show the pieces in different styles, which can result in a desire to purchase that piece even if the customer was not planning to purchase it. Furthermore, in the purchase stage, the study showed that family and friends as social/external touchpoints shape customer purchasing decisions. For instance, customers accompany their family members or close friends to choose clothes from the store as this experience evokes feelings like trust, confidence, and relief in the customers' decisions in the purchase stage.

5. Conclusion

In the pre-purchase stage, the study indicated that Egyptian customers who purchase from high street fashion stores tend to highlight that the most crucial Brand-owned touchpoint in the pre-purchase stage is the mobile application. Customers declared that they continuously keep checking their mobile applications which became a lifestyle routine. Moreover, customers tend to pass by the store regularly to see the collection, eventually, leading to an experience/purchase. The current study added to the literature that past experiences (pre-purchasing/purchasing) shape customers' future pre-purchasing and purchases experience. In the pre-purchasing stage, social media platforms as social/external touchpoints influence the customer experience. The study highlighted that social media had become a routine for everyone's lifestyle and opened the customers' minds to different looks and new styles in the fashion sector.

In the purchase stage, the study added to the literature that the customers in the purchasing experience with their favorite store are not only a need that is satisfied, but it is evolving into unforgettable moments and pleasant experiences. Hence, this study articulates that the experience in the purchase stage is about living the entire experience that goes beyond a purchasing transaction to a feeling of living the whole experience. In the context of the current research, in the purchasing stage, customers gain *value*, which emerges from physically connecting with the brand-owned touch points and the emotions associated with these touch points. Customers' emotions in such stage are favorable emotions which can help winding down from everyday thinking or daily responsibility. In

the purchase stage, the study revealed that social media platforms as a social touchpoint shape the buying experience and can lead to an unplanned customer experience. In the purchase stage, the novelty in this research is that friends/family shape the customers' purchasing decisions because it is the stage that the consumers decide to purchase. Previous studies indicated that social interactions and the presence of other customers shaped the customer experience, indicating that such influence is more visible in the pre-purchase stage (Stein et al., 2016).

In the post-purchase stage, customers indicated that the refund policy is crucial. In this stage, consumers aim to refund/exchange easily after purchasing. The research added to the knowledge concerning the refund policy, which is vital to mitigate the risk perception, addressing matters such as refund and exchange policy occurring smoothly, quickly, and flexibly. An easy refund policy makes the customers rest assured of any transaction and provides feelings such as safety and comfort. Thus, the smooth refund policy the store can offer creates a superior, easier, and unforgettable customer experience.

6. Managerial Implications

The present study aimed to explain better and integrate customer experience research that also benefits managerial practice. The study aimed to understand the customer perspective throughout the journey by understanding the customer responses and reactions to touchpoints that can differ in nature and strength. Firms should provide customers with memorable and positive experiences and go beyond to engage the customer emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Firms should depend on value co-creation; in that way, where firms can determine which customer responses they hope to trigger. Thus, firms should develop unique customer experience measures to seize various types of customer responses. The study directs firms that they should not focus exclusively on individual touchpoints such as a physical store or digital touchpoint such as website or application but rather should consider the connectivity between the customers and social/external touchpoints that customers encounter along their journeys. Moreover, methods need to be developed by firms to understand and monitor touchpoints beyond their control; for example, firms can provide platforms where customers can interact (Trudeau et al., 2016) or partner with stakeholders that control external touchpoints (Baron et al., 2010). Firms should

also continuously observe the customer dealings with external touchpoints such as social media (for example a page on Instagram and Facebook) and consider opportunities for adapting firm-controlled touchpoints accordingly to improve the whole experience.

7. Limitations and Future Research

One of the study's limitations is that the study focused on one industry, the fashion sector. Future research should consider having a more comprehensive approach of comparing several industries. However, the present study contributes to customer experience from the customer feelings and emotions. Future research should employ efforts to study the customer experiences process, including other stakeholders. That is, the study focused on customers but it would be important to also include employees, managers, suppliers, and other business partners. Moreover, future research should also consider other countries to broaden the study of customer experience. Future research should address this limitation to broaden data collection. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to involve more customers from different industries and countries.

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دور نقاط الاتصال في تشكيل تجربة العميل طوال رحلة العميل

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الملخص

الهدف: رحلات العملاء في أسواق اليوم هي "متعددة اللمس" ومتعددة القنوات. وبالتالي، فإن أهمية دراسة رحلات العملاء تعكس الحاجة إلى فهم كيفية دخول العميل في دورة مستمرة من الخبرة من خلال التعامل مع نقاط الاتصال المختلفة. يهدف البحث إلى فهم الارتباط بين كيفية تشكيل نقاط الاتصال لتجربة العميل وكيفية تطورها طوال رحلة العميل من مرحلة ما قبل الشراء إلى الشراء إلى مرحلة ما بعد الشراء. الهدف من هذا البحث هو فهم كيفية تشكيل تجربة العملاء في نقاط اتصال متعددة، عبر الإنترنت وخارجها؛ بمعنى آخر، نقاط الاتصال المملوكة للعلامة التجارية والاجتماعية/الخارجية.

منهجية البحث: تم إنشاء هذا البحث باستخدام منهج نوعي باستخدام المقابلات للتحقيق مع العملاء الذين يشترون من متاجر الأزياء الراقية في مصر؛ وركزت الدراسة على خمسة متاجر هي: زارا، مانجو، بول أند بير، بيرشكا وستراديفاريوس. تم جمع البيانات من خلال إجراء خمس وعشرين مقابلة. تم تسجيل المقابلات الخمس والعشرين رقمياً ثم تم نسخها بالكامل. تم إبلاغ جميع الأشخاص الذين تمت مقابلتهم بالسرية وعدم الكشف عن هويتهم. وبعد نقطة معينة، وصلت المقابلات إلى التشعب الدلالي في عملية جمع البيانات حيث لم يتم إضافة أي معلومات جديدة أو تم إضافة القليل منها (Gummesson, 2005). ولم يقدم الأشخاص الذين أجريت معهم المقابلات أي موضوعات جديدة تتعلق بالدراسة، وقد ظهر ذلك بين المقابلات العشرين والثانية والعشرين، في إجمالي خمس وعشرين مقابلة.

النتائج: تكشف النتائج أن هناك أدلة تجريبية تدعم فكرة أن نقاط الاتصال المملوكة للعلامة التجارية ونقاط الاتصال الاجتماعية/الخارجية تؤثر على تجربة العميل بأكملها في مرحلة ما قبل الشراء والشراء وما بعد الشراء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تجربة العملاء، نقاط الاتصال، رحلة العميل.