The Influence of Emotions on (Ex)perience of Buying in Times of Crisis

Abstract: Among the continually changing segments is retail. In particular, in times of pandemic, consumer and brand interaction is rethought so that the experience becomes memorable, thus influencing the repurchase. However, in times of crisis, consumers become more emotional in engaging with brands throughout their journey. In this sense, this article sought to discuss the purchasing process from the consumer's experience and how companies can consider consumers' emotions throughout interactions in physical and virtual environments. We also present a research agenda so that researchers and marketers can evaluate the experience in the purchase process with emotion as a starting point.

Keywords: Emotions; Experience; Retailing.

1. Introduction

In a few months of the classification of the pandemic with COVID-19, it is possible to verify the direct influence on social relations and the concern of companies with the consumer purchasing experience. Companies began to face market obstacles aimed at giving new meaning to the experience of customers, going beyond the commercial transaction. Moreover, to break the barrier of fear, anger, sadness, and especially the uncertainties of this scenario, the concern with emotions gain prominence, the final, can impact a new positioning that creates emotional bonds between brands and consumers. In this sense, the proposal in this opinion article is to discuss the influence of emotions on the purchasing experience of consumers at this time of pandemic and also present potential themes of future research, and that may help management decision-making.

2. (Ex)perience of purchase and emotions: Nothing will be as before

The customer experience is a multidimensional construction focused on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory, and social responses to a company's offerings throughout the purchase journey. Therefore, a key element to understand and manage the customer experience is the ability to measure and monitor customer reactions to company offerings, especially customer attitudes and perceptions (LEMON; VERHOEF, 2016).

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent reality of social isolation, the shopping experience is different. With the need to provide physical and digital channels, the pandemic has reinforced the importance of strategies that demonstrate affection and concern on the part of the company with the consumer in any interaction environment (PANTANO; GANDINI, 2018). For the authors, retailers begin to restructure rapidly to serve consumers from the combination of store access and use of communication technologies.

In this new scenario it is essential to understand what types of experiences customers are likely to value after the pandemic: if before, many consumer experiences were focused on creating fun, entertainment and engagement, after the pandemic, consumers will evaluate the experience based on criteria such as store cleaning and preventive measures for social distancing (ROGGEVEEN; SETHURAMAN, 2020). The challenge will also be for consumers to overcome by feelings that may change during the shopping journey. Therefore,

retailers need to reflect on the impact of consumer emotion during each touchpoint on any channels, physical or digital the authors say. The expectation is that companies that focus on the consumer at this time will get ahead in the memory of the consumer in post-pandemic times.

If, on the one hand, companies seek to offer new forms of experiences, by other, consumers experience and express their emotions in different ways in this context. Emotions influence information processing, mediate responses to persuasive appeals, and measure the effects of marketing stimuli (BAGOZZI; GOPINATH; NYER, 1999). Thus, understanding the role of emotions can contribute significantly to the development of marketing strategies, after all, throughout the journey consumers have reactions that influence their experience (GREWAL; ROGGEVEEN, 2020)

According to research conducted by McKinsey in Brazil (2020), most consumers are facing a decline in income and economy and, consequently, are reducing their spending in all categories, except home entertainment and household products. "Less essential" goods and services have been negatively impacted, such as sporting goods, tourism, and luxury. Also, basic emotions (negative or positive) such as anger (annoyance, hostility, contempt, jealousy), sadness (agony, guilt, loneliness), fear (horror, worry) or love (affection, passion) and joy (happiness, satisfaction, pride) (FISCHER; SHAVER, SHAVER, SHAVER. CARNOCHAN, 1990) have become more intense in purchasing experience.

Among the emotions in this period is the anger arising from "being quarantined and without social contact" (VEENSTRA et al., 2017). The sadness, by the feeling of loss related to resources that affect health or well-being (SALERNO; LARAN, LARAN; JANISZEWSKI, 2014) and also the fear generated by the risk of contamination and the uncertainty in having to postpone dreams due to the set of psychological and behavioral responses associated with the moment (COLEMAN et al., 2017) .

In this scenario, the consumer can also feel proud to engage in significant altruistic behavior (PARAMITA; SEPTIANTO, SEPTIANTO, SEPTIANTO TJIPTONO, 2020; Pham, PHAM, PHAM, PHAM SUN, 2020; SALERNO; LARAN, LARAN; JANISZEWSKI, 2015) demanding accountability and transparency of brands in the face of the pandemic. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report 2020: Brands and Coronavirus, 33% of global consumers convinced others to stop using a brand because they believe they did not act appropriately in response to a pandemic. Besides, pride tends to be magnified when an achievement is witnessed by an audience and positively enhanced by social feedback (PHAM; SUN, 2020). A behavior that has stood out in social networks is the appreciation of local production and the purchase of a small business, which brings a definite feeling of helping in regional development.

Affection and passion (LANGESLAG; VAN STEENBERGEN, 2019) are examples of positive emotions that can be reinforced by companies. The Edelman Trust Barometer 2020 Special Report: Brands and Coronavirus show that 88% of consumers expect brands to act to bring people together, and 89% expect them to keep their audience informed about how they are supporting and protecting employees and customers.

Thus, the management of emotions becomes a challenge for companies that need to create strategies so that the shopping experience is satisfactory, memorable and distinct, even with reduced physical contact and the experimentation (SACHDEVA; GOEL, 2015). So, retail will have less to do with what need to sell and more about the way to sell it. The trend is that we have more critical and demanding consumers in the future, as emotion becomes a critical factor in the experience between consumer and brand (BAMBAUER-SACHSE; MANGOLD, 2011; LEMON, LEMON; VERHOEF, 2016; ROGGEVEEN, NEW MS. SETHURAMAN, 2020)

3. **Reflection on improvements in the consumer experience** from **emotions**

Companies must think at this time in the short term; after all, it is necessary to survive (ROGGEVEEN; SETHURAMAN, 2020). Thus, some proposals of studies that can contribute to the understanding of the impact of emotions on new purchasing experiences are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research agenda on emotions and experience and purchase

Theme	Search questions
Emotions	▪ How do negative emotions influence crisis scenarios? ▪ What strategies potentiate emotions during the buying journey? ▪ How can brands stimulate positive emotions in crisis scenarios? How can they be measured? ▪ How did emotions flow into the decision of purchasing channels? Is there a change during the purchase process? How do they impact restrictive scenarios? ▪ What emotions enhance the company's performance? ▪ How do consumers express their emotions? ▪ Can the company reduce the impacts generated by negative consumer emotions from the pandemic? ▪ How do emotions influence the relationship between brand and consumer over time? What are the particularities in a regular and crisis context? ▪ How can the use of new technologies interfere with emotions and the relationship between company and customer? ▪ In what context is the consumer willing to change their habits? Furthermore, what emotions do companies need to stimulate? ▪ What emotions have been reinforced in changing the shopping experience? Moreover, how does that impact the purchasing process? ▪ How are emotions perceived among different consumers during the shopping journey? What are the differences between social classes in the context of uncertainties and risks? ▪ How can sales promotion impact the post-pandemic buying process? Is it a strategy that can be adopted for all markets? ▪ What consumer niches can emerge after the crisis? How to set criteria to improve the buying experience of each niche? ▪ What is the impact of hedonic *versus* utilitarian communication on the pandemic shopping experience?
Shopping experience	▪ What are the criteria for the consumer in his experience of buying in the real point? f Was there a change in these criteria before and from the pandemic? Which ones? ▪ What are the active points of contact for digital purchases? ▪ What are the determining factors in the choice of the post-pandemic shopping channel? ▪ What is the impact of brand content on the purchase decision during and after the pandemic? ▪ How will the perception of the presence of the seller in the post-pandemic shopping experience? What will be the role of the seller in the digital purchasing environment from the pandemic? ▪ What are the determinants of purchasing decision/intent on digital channels for consumers of different generations? ▪ How about the choose shopping channels during the

consumer's journey of experiential products such as food/cosmetics?
- How looks like the high emotional engagement product and service shopping experiences?
- What are the new criteria for evaluating quality in the purchase of services after the pandemic?

Although the consumer experience and emotions have been studied intensely in academia, the combination of themes can be considered an opportunity for future research with the direct implication in the development of marketing strategies. However, it is essential to deepen further what is already known about the topics and assess new gaps. Therefore, in this opinion article, the proposal was to instigate researchers on how emotions can influence the buying experience in critical consumption scenarios.

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