

BUILDING CONSUMER LOYALTY THROUGH E-SHOPPING EXPERIENCES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONS

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Keywords: online customer experience; retail; loyalty; emotions; trustworthiness

BUILDING CONSUMER LOYALTY THROUGH E-SHOPPING

EXPERIENCES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONS

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Abstract

In the retail sector, it has become necessary for retailers to differentiate themselves using new strategies, such as managing shopping experiences. Knowing how to design and apply these experiences can stimulate consumers' loyalty, with benefits for the retailer. Under this premise, the objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between different dimensions of the e-shopping experience, identified from a literature review, and attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. In addition, this study highlights the importance of emotional experience, analyzing the mediating effect of emotional experience on the relationship between online experiences and consumers' loyalty. Using a survey methodology on a sample of 496 consumers, the results show that using different experiences could influence loyalty in two different ways: directly affecting attitudinal loyalty (especially when website trustworthiness is low and consumers experience more uncertainty) and indirectly affecting behavioral loyalty through emotional experience.

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Building consumer loyalty through e-shopping experiences: the mediating role of emotions

Abstract

In the retail sector, it has become necessary for retailers to differentiate themselves using new strategies, such as managing shopping experiences. The retailer can benefit from applying these experiences in order to gain loyal customers. The purpose of this research is to advance in the analysis of the different dimensions of the e-shopping experience, identified from a literature review, and attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. In addition, this study highlights the importance of emotional experience, analyzing the mediating effect of emotional experience on the relationship between online experiences and consumers' loyalty. The empirical research is based on a sample of 496 consumers. The results reveal that using different experiences could influence loyalty in two different ways: directly affecting attitudinal loyalty (especially when website trustworthiness is low and consumers experience more uncertainty) and indirectly affecting behavioral loyalty through emotional experience.

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1. Introduction

The consumer is changing. Consumers are more capricious and less loyal (Lobaugh et al., 2019). They want to optimize searching time and compare products and services. New technologies, together with new consumer behavior, also are changing the offline and online

retail sector (Grewal et al., 2017). This new consumer behavior is marked by a more experiential consumer who wants to have unique and unrepeatable experiences during the customer journey (Grewal and Roggeveen, 2020). They use the visit for entertainment purposes and evaluate service in terms of how much pleasure or fun they have enjoyed. This new situation has led retailers to modify their marketing strategies, to show consumers the added value of their products and services. Thus, retailers have become increasingly aware of the need to create value for their customers in the form of experiences and emotions (Srivastava and Kaul, 2016; Andreini et al., 2018; Högberg et al., 2019; Verhoef, 2020).

Shopping experience research has focused on the relationship with consumer satisfaction, without placing much emphasis on consumer behavioral variables (Brun et al., 2017; Waqas et al., 2020). The objective that the online retailer seeks is to achieve the behavioral and attitudinal loyalty of the consumers. However, even though building loyalty is necessary for successful management of customers' experience and emotions, little research has been conducted that incorporates both variables into explaining customer loyalty, thus signifying a gap in the online substantive knowledge. The main contribution of this study is the relationship of different experience dimensions and the consumer's attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Based on the findings of this study, a retailer can identify the shopping experiences that must be enhanced to gain loyal customers and differentiate themselves from the competition.

This article advances the literature on retail business management in three ways. In the first place, research on online shopping experiences is extended (Schmitt, 1999; Fornerino et al., 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 2009; Verleye, 2015; Srivastava and Kaul, 2016; Bleier et al., 2019), studying the influence of different online experience dimensions (visual, intellectual, social, pragmatic and emotional) and attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Secondly, the current paper investigates the importance

of the emotional experience, analyzing the mediating role in the relationship between experience and loyalty. Third, there are few investigations that analyze the moderating role of website trustworthiness. This study expands the existing knowledge, analyzing this moderating effect in the relationship between experiences and attitudinal loyalty.

We review in the next section the relevant literature on the subject and propose various hypotheses. We then describe the methodology and the results of our causal model. In the last section, we indicated the main conclusions and implications for business management.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

In an online retail context, customers assess products through verbal and visual stimuli (design elements) deployed on web pages (Bleier et al., 2019). Thus, shopping experience depends on the aspects that online retailers can control (e.g., web design, quality of the information, price, promotion, customization, learning, flow, augmented reality, adventurous activity or “a challenge”, socialization, color swatching, dynamic imaging, zoom, enlarged product view, spin the products, rich media) and other factors that are outside the retailer's control (e.g., communication between consumers, shopping motivations) (Verhoef et al., 2009; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). In this research, we consider customer experience as responses to managerial stimuli (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020).

Consumers can react differently to the same advertising campaign, the same environment at the point of sale, or an increase in prices. To explain this behavior, this research focuses on the "Stimulus-Organism-Response" (S-O-R) model, where S = Perception of the external stimulus or change in the environment that influences a person and encourages him or her to act; O = Organism or internal processes and structures resulting from the perceptions of a person, the psychological characteristics, motivations, and learning from it;

and R = Response or behavior of the organism, including reactions related to intentions and / or behaviors.

The S-O-R model is widely accepted in the field of marketing in general and consumer behavior in particular (Toman, 1936; Eroglu and Machleit, 1990; Eroglu, Machleit, and Davis, 2001; Jüttner, Schaffner, Windler, and Maklan, 2013; Trevinal and Stenger, 2014; Kim et al., 2020; Laato et al., 2020). The first contributions to the literature on the S-O-R model were made by Tolman (1936), who affirms that the organism selects, perceives, and processes the stimuli in its environment, developing a “cognitive map” of the same that serves to guide its behavior. Tolman’s model (1936) is used to study the organism, its behavior, and the organic and environmental conditions that induce such behavior, which allows considering independent variables (stimulus), mediating variables, and dependent variables (response). A first application of this model to the marketing area was made by Kotler (1973). This author states that the perception of the environment or atmosphere of a retail establishment affects purchasing behavior through the following causal reaction: the product is available in a space that has certain sensory qualities, which are perceived by each buyer differently and they influence the information processed by each person and their affective state, and may increase or decrease attitudinal loyalty. Another pioneering study in the use of the S-O-R model is that of Mehrabian and Russell (1974), who analyzed the behavior of individuals in a given environment (stimuli). Stimuli influence the body, specifically, the cognitive and affective processes of consumers, which leads to a behavioral response. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the pioneers in introducing experience as a component of consumer behavior and recognizing the perception of experience as a key variable in understanding the internal behavioral process and consumer response. Since then, this concept of experience and its multidimensional nature have been developing (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Arnold and

Reynolds, 2003; Schmitt, 2003; Grewal, Levy, and Kumar, 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2020).

In line with the dimensions of offline shopping experiences identified in the literature (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), we conceptualize the online customer experience as consisting of five dimensions: visual, intellectual, social, pragmatic, and emotional. In the following subsections, we review each dimension of the online customer experience.

2.1. Visual experience

Since online retailers lack the possibility to create a physical experience, not all senses can be stimulated in an online experience (Cleef et al., 2018). This is why this study focuses on the online visual experience. The importance of visual experience in retailing was first pointed out by Kotler (1973). It is an important part of sensory experience (Gentile et al., 2007), because it is an important way to capture the consumers' attention and to attract them to the website. Several aspects related to sight have been analyzed in the literature: the psychological effects of color, the design of the website, ease of use, digital merchandising, etc. Color affects the reactions of the human body, provoking physiological and emotional responses (Chen and Wu, 2016). Studies affirm that warm colors produce greater attraction, evoking emotions associated with cheerful moods, vitality, and higher levels of distraction, while cold colors are associated with affective states such as peacefulness, calm, and happiness (Bellizzi et al., 1983; Roschk et al., 2017). For example, the color blue, associated with relaxation and tranquility, can spark consumer creativity, and the color red, associated with excitement and stimulation, can awaken analytical skills.

Barnes and Vidgen (2001) proposed a scale of website quality that contains items measuring the visual experience of visiting a website, addressing issues such as design, use of colors and

style, building interest, attractive appearance, and easy navigation. The website design is reflected in both the visual and formal elements and in the entertainment aspects of it (Mathwick et al. 2001, Wang et al., 2011), all to stimulate the shopping experience. The combination of the use of color, the quality of graphics and photographs, and design elements of the assortments determines the visual experience (Rose et al., 2012; Kahn, 2017). This dimension refers to the website having an attractive design, which is organized by some type of criteria, with a logical structure that favors its usability and the flow state of the consumer, resulting in easy-to-understand web browsing, with a visual appearance that attracts the customer's attention. In addition, the consumer can enjoy experiences of aesthetic pleasure and a sense of beauty through the sense of sight. An optimally appealing and congruent store atmosphere can enhance shoppers' emotional experience of the retail setting (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013; Helmfalk and Hultén, 2017). In this regard, congruent visual cues have an evident impact on affective reactions (Cheng and Wu, 2016). Also, it is believed that a good online visual experience could have a positive impact on the loyalty to the retailer (Cleef et al., 2018).

2.2. Intellectual experience

Intellectual experience is a component of customer experienced connected with thinking or conscious mental process (Bleier et al., 2019). It is related to a web page's contribution to helping the consumer to revise the usual idea of a product or some common mental assumptions or in situations of problem-solving (Gentile et al., 2007). A website may stimulate customers' curiosity (Hill et al., 2016) and promote using their creativity and imagination (Zeng et al., 2012). Customer curiosity during the act of purchase is related to the mystery that the retailer may create (Menon and Soman, 2002). Stimulating consumer curiosity is a challenge for retailers, since it is related to positive results for them (Hill et al.,

2016). Technology-enhanced experiences add value to the customer purchase journey (Flavián et al., 2019) and have a tremendous impact on customer experience (Hoyer et al., 2020). A recently used tool by retailers is augmented reality (Scholz and Smith, 2016; Flavián et al., 2019) and artificial intelligence (Chopra, 2019), with a promising future (Javornik, 2016; Martínez-Navarro et al., 2019). These new technologies combine the real world with the virtual world, enriching the visual experience and stimulating consumer curiosity (Carmigniani and Furht, 2011), and providing a mentally stimulating, enjoyable, and interesting experience to the customer (Parise et al., 2016).

When designing the website, a retailer should think about the process of reflection and surprise that he wishes to create. Combining an original product assortment with the stimulation of creativity by the retailer (for example through augmented reality) can generate customer loyalty (Foroudi, Jin, Gupta, Melewar, and Foroudi, 2016; Srivastava and Kaul 2016; Brun et al., 2017; Cleef et al., 2018). The objective can also be to engage the customer in creative problem-solving and product/service co-creation. Product comparison and customization tools may stimulate cognitive capacity and add an element of co-creation to customer experience (Verleye, 2015), increasing customer loyalty (Cossío-Silva et al., 2016).

2.3. Social experience

This type of experience involves the consumer and, beyond, his/her social context and relationship with other consumers (Gentile et al., 2007; Ferguson, Paulin, and Bergeron, 2010) and the staff of the website. It includes the personal desire for continuous improvement or personal improvement, and the desire to be positively perceived by other individuals in the social environment. In addition, authors consider that the “feeling of human interaction” is also relevant (Hassanein and Head, 2007; Yoo and Alavi, 2001), no matter if the counterpart is real (e.g., email or telephone) or a virtual/electronic assistant (as Google or Siri assistants,

or any animated icon on a website). It does not really exist, but the consumer can ask it for advice. Shopping is a social experience (Tauber, 1972), customer behavior is modified by the group. Social experiences provide various non-monetary benefits for the consumer (Borges, Chebat, and Babin, 2010). For example, obtain information about products or services that reflect the consumer's lifestyle. In addition, shopping allows consumers to interact with other customers with shared interests.

We can distinguish between experience that is lived with other consumers and experience when interacting with the staff (Argo and Dahl, 2020). In terms of interaction with employees, at the online level, instilling a sense of human warmth and sociability can be accomplished by providing means for actual interaction with other humans (via virtual communities, message boards, chats, etc.) (Hassanein and Head, 2007; Wang et al., 2007). Consumers currently consider the process of shopping as a social act. During their shopping experience they enjoy the company of friends and family (Mangleburg et al., 2004), but they can also have a good time dealing with employees (Chang et al., 2011), which intensifies emotional experience and loyalty (Penz and Hogg, 2011; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). Being advised, understood, and heard by employees (physical or virtual) is highly valued by consumers and can awaken positive emotions of consumers during shopping (Tsaour et al., 2006), with a consequent increase in their loyalty (Ieva and Ziliani, 2018).

2.4. Pragmatic experience

The pragmatic experience is a dimension of the customer experience coming from the practical act of doing something (Gentile et al., 2007). In this sense, the consumer does not go to a store for its aesthetics, but is motivated by functionality, convenience, promotions and prices. With the pragmatic experience, the online retailer exhibits actions of using the interface to accomplish shopping goals (offering such convenience features as store locator,

coupons/sales, alternative payments, and catalog quick order, facilitating ease of accomplishing the shopping task and boosting self-efficacy of the consumer).

This type of experience refers to selection criteria linked to value for money, as well as convenience (perceptions of time and effort), speed, and efficiency of information search actions and purchase at the retail store (Beauchamp and Ponder, 2010; Walsh et al., 2011; Jiang, Yang, and Jun, 2013). Several authors (Gentile et al., 2007; Nambisan and Watt, 2011, Salehi, Salimi, and Haque, 2013; Trevinal and Stenger, 2014) propose a conceptualization of experience that would stimulate the consumer through sensory, intellectual, and social experience, as well as through pragmatic experience. A retailer who wants to offer a pragmatic experience could, for example, offer products with better promotions, or simply a better value for money than their competitors. This would allow the retailer to attract consumers whose main interest is promotions and prices. Therefore, the retailer must be aware of the need to have sufficient stock of the promoted products, and to ensure that the quality of the products is not inferior in these products. Other points of interest for this pragmatic consumer would be to offer a wide variety of assortment, all types of guarantees and, complementary services (such as free delivery or exchanges).

There is evidence in the literature that states that this type of consumer can feel emotions as a result of this type of pragmatic experience (Spinelli et al., 2015). Although apparently only hedonic consumption seems to be related to the emotional experience, there is literature that relates them to utilitarian consumption. So simply having a good time searching for the best value for money product can generate emotions (Alba and Williams, 2013). Furthermore, the creation of pragmatic experiences positively influences attitudinal loyalty (there are incentives to re-living the purchase process when it has been effective, useful, and convenient) (Walsh et al., 2011).

2.5. Emotional experience

The literature review indicates that consumers want positive emotional experiences during their purchases (Kim, Park, Lee, and Choi, 2016; Ladhari, Souiden, and Dufour, 2017). Many retailers base their strategy on experiential marketing, in order to associate their company / brand with certain values. The ultimate goal is to attract the attention of the emotional consumer so that the bonds are deeper and share that emotional experience by increasing their engagement (Mishra, Bakshi, and Singh, 2016; Das et al., 2019).

Most of the studies do not analyze the interrelation that may exist between the different dimensions of the experience. However, the characteristics of the store, employees' smile, or an ambient service environment affect customers' positive emotional responses in the store (Yoo et al., 1998; de Ruyter and Bloemer, 1999). This research proposes that there is a hierarchical structure of consumer shopping experiences (Schmitt, 1999; Nasermodeli et al., 2013; Tsaour et al, 2007), relating visual experiences, intellectual experiences, social experiences, and pragmatic experiences with emotional experiences. In conclusion, it is considered that there is a sequence cognitive–affective between shopping experiences (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). As a result, this study expects that:

H1. Favorable perceptions of (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, and (d) pragmatic experience will cause a positive influence on emotional experiences.

2.6. The effect of shopping experiences on customers' attitudinal and behavioral loyalty

Crosby and Johnson (2007) affirm that the customer's experience is an important variable in building customer loyalty. The literature empirically supports a direct relationship

between brand experience and brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Cleff et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020). Table 1 summarizes the research that analyzes the relationship between consumer experience and loyalty. Applied to the retail sector, Srisvastava and Kaul (2016) empirically tested the offline relationship between attitudinal and behavioral loyalty and found that customer experience affects customer spending via attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. However, there is not much literature that identifies the behavioral consequences of the dimensions of experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This leads us to expect that in the online context:

H2. Favorable perceptions of (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, (d) pragmatic experience, and (e) emotional experience have a positive effect on consumers' attitudinal loyalty.

H3. Favorable perceptions of (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, (d) pragmatic experience, and (e) emotional experience have a positive effect on consumers' behavioral loyalty.

Under this premise, this research proposes a hypothesis about the mediating effect of emotional experience between cognitive evaluations (derived from different shopping experiences) and the response variable (in this case, loyalty) (Caro and García, 2007). Consumers enjoy the shopping experience, which activates their emotional state (the shopping experience is considered an important tool for the development of emotional experiences), which, in turn, leads to customer loyalty. Hence, we hypothesize an indirect link between experience and loyalty through emotional experience. This leads us to expect that:

H4. Emotional experience acts as a mediator between (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, and (d) pragmatic experience and attitudinal loyalty.

H5. Emotional experience acts as a mediator between (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, and (d) pragmatic experience and behavioral loyalty.

Table 1

Studies that analyze the link between customer experience and loyalty

AUTHORS	SECTOR	DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE	MEDIATION OF EMOTIONS	CONCLUSIONS
Tsaur et al. (2006)	Tourism	Sensory, affective cognitive, physical/behavioral Social	No	Experience positively impacts emotions, which subsequently impacts satisfaction and loyalty
Brakus et al. (2009)	Brand	Sensory, affective intellectual, behavioral	No	Experience (integrated) directly impacts loyalty and indirectly through brand personality
Iglesias et al. (2011)	Brand	Sensory, affective intellectual, behavioral	No	Experience (integrated) does not directly impact loyalty but does so indirectly through affective commitment
Sahin et al. (2011)	Brand	Sensory, affective intellectual, behavioral	No	Experience (integrated) directly impacts loyalty and indirectly through trust and satisfaction
Yoon (2013)	Retail	Sense, feel, think, act, relate	No	Sense, act, and relate are more likely to influence e-WOM quantity
Foroudi et al. (2016)	Retail	Intellectual, affective	No	Experiences modify the effect of complex demographics on loyalty
Srivastava and Kaul (2016)	Retail	Feel, relate, sense, think	No	Experience (integrated) directly impacts attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, which, in turn, leads to greater share of wallet
Brun et al. (2017)	Banking and tourism	Cognitive, affective, sensory, behavioral, social	No	Cognitive, negative affect, behavioral, and social directly impact service provider loyalty
Bustamante y Rubio (2017)	Retail	Cognitive, affective, social, physical	No	In-store customer experience has a positive direct impact on customer loyalty and a positive indirect impact through customer satisfaction
Cleff et al. (2018)	Travel	Sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, relational	No	Sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and relational have a positive effect on brand loyalty
Bleier et al. (2019)	Retail	Informativeness, entertainment, social present, sensory appeal	No	Informativeness and social presence are key dimensions by which design elements affect purchase decisions

2.7. Relationship between attitudinal and behavioral loyalty

Jacoby et al. (1978) were the first authors who separated attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, based on the theory of reasoned action. It is interesting to know the consumer's

attitudinal loyalty since it supposes an indicator of the real behavior of future purchase (behavioral loyalty) (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005).

The convenience of analyzing behavioral or attitudinal loyalty depends on the durability and tangibility of the product (Rundle-Thiele and Bennett, 2001; East et al., 2005). For products of frequent consumption, loyalty could be measured only from the repetition of purchase, while this measure would not be sufficient for sporadic purchases and services. Thus, this research integrates the behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of loyalty (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Pritchard and Howard, 1997). We considered that behavioral loyalty after consumers' experience is manifested in consumer spending, while attitudinal loyalty is manifested in behavioral intentions. It is to be expected that these behavioral intentions positively affect the real behavior of the consumer. Therefore, we reinforce the importance of the influence of attitudinal loyalty on behavioral loyalty:

H6. Attitudinal loyalty is positively related to behavioral loyalty.

2.8. The moderating influence of website trustworthiness on the effects of online customer experiences on attitudinal loyalty

In online shopping environments, not being able to touch the product to assess its characteristics is a physical barrier between customers and products. Thus, it is essential that customers trust the veracity of the website. It is here that the reliability of the seller's brand (Pavlou, Liang, and Xue, 2007) plays a fundamental role. Trust shows the "willingness to trust an exchange partner in whom one has trust in the Verbal Elements" (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande, 1992, p. 315). The literature relates online trust to variables such as purchasing decisions (Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub, 2003; Hoffman, Novak, and Peralta, 1999) or web design (Shankar, Urban, and Sultan, 2002; Urban, Amyx, and Lorenzon, 2009).

In this sense, the literature suggests that personalization of content according to customer preferences (Urban et al., 2009), social presence (Gefen and Straub, 2003), or shopping experience (Bart et al., 2005) could help to compensate for the low trustworthiness of the brand. Specifically, this trustworthiness can influence the effects of the dimensions of the shopping experience. In line with Bleier et al. (2019), this research uses the website trustworthiness as a moderating variable in the relationship of shopping experiences and attitudinal loyalty. Thus, we can propose that:

H7. As the website’s trustworthiness decreases, the positive influence of the experience dimensions on the consumer attitudinal loyalty increases.

The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1.

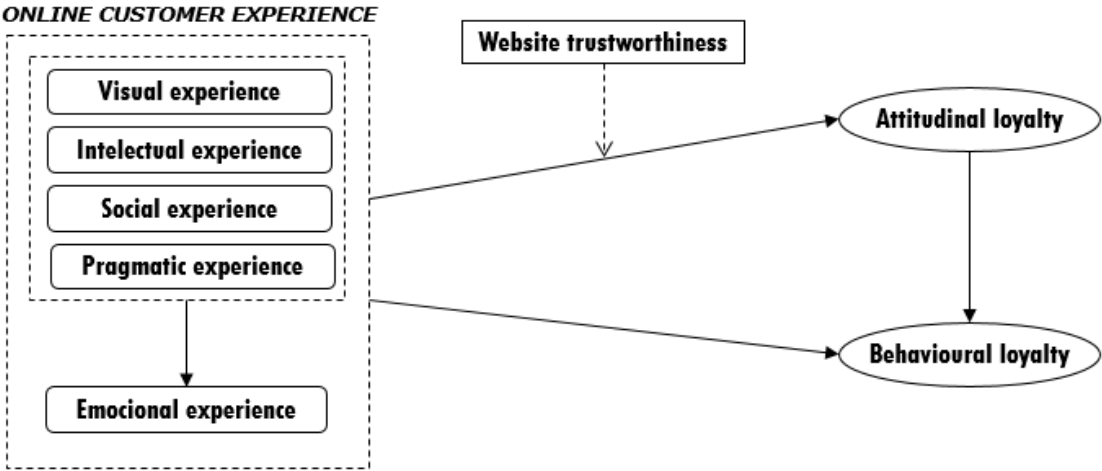


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and data collection

The empirical analysis of this research focused on the retail sector. As Dekimpe (2020) indicates, it is an attractive sector to investigate, due to its size and its multifaceted and dynamic nature.

To test the proposed hypotheses, the present investigation analyzes nine online retail sectors in Spain: shoes, clothing store and fashion, jewelry, decoration, cosmetics and perfumery, electronics, sports, bookstores, and toys. These sectors were selected because they are those where brands offer different types of online shopping experiences: visual, intellectual, social, pragmatic, and emotional. The final sample comprised 496 online consumers. Each consumer indicated his/her perceptions of an online retailer that he/she had visited in the last two weeks. The stratified sample was done by gender (50.2% female; 49.8 male) and age (73.8% between 18 and 44 years and 26.2% over 45 years).

3.2. Measures

An electronic survey was used as a method for collecting information. For the purpose of this study, before answering the questions, the interviewers had to think of a recent online shopping experience where they had bought something. Then consumers had to indicate their perceptions on different dimensions of the online shopping experiences, and sentences related to attitudinal loyalty and consumer spending.

All concepts were measured with Likert scale. To measure behavioral loyalty, we used the amount spent in that visit to the store. Scales were taken from existing literature: Schmitt (1999), Brakus et al. (2009), Gentile et al. (2007), Pentina et al. (2011), and Nasermodeli et al. (2013) for shopping experiences; Brakus et al. (2009), Srivastava and Kaul (2016), and Brun et al. (2017) for attitudinal loyalty; and Umashankar, Bhagwat, and Kumar (2016) for behavioral loyalty, adapting these scales to the retail sector.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1. Measurement assessment

Before analyzing the conceptual model, the reliability and validity of the scales were checked (applying confirmatory factorial analysis), and the results are summarized in Table 2. Firstly, item reliability was evaluated based on the factor loadings of the items on their respective constructs. As all the factor loadings were higher than the threshold value of 0.6, convergent validity was supported. The Cronbach alpha coefficient values met the minimum cut-off value of 0.70 for all constructs (Nunnally, 1978). Similarly, as recommended by Hair et al. (2006) and Bagozzi and Yi (1988), composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values met the minimum cut-off of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Discriminant validity has also been verified (the confidence intervals of all the correlations did not contain the value one, and their squared value did not exceed the AVE) (Table 3). Model fit indices were $\chi^2/\text{degrees of freedom}=1.243$ ($p=0.00$); NFI (0.9077); GFI (0.915); CFI (0.902); SRMR (0.045); and RMSEA (0.062), indicating acceptable measurement model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Table 2

Item descriptive and convergent validity

CONSTRUCT	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach alphas
VISUAL EXPERIENCE		0.826	0.543	0.792
The design of the website (colors, font size, photographs) is attractive.	0.748			
The content organization of the portal (by sex, type of products, price) is adequate and intuitive, stimulating my shopping experience.	0.811			
There are no links and unwanted ads on the website, which favors the design of the web.	0.697			
The website is in the consumer's language, favoring the shopping experience.	0.685			
INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE		0.852	0.590	0.848
Website always accessible, which stimulates problem-solving.	0.744			
The website I downloaded is quick, drawing my attention and involving me in a thinking process.	0.788			
The website is easy to use, stimulating my imagination.	0.817			
It contains updated and relevant information, stimulating my creativity.	0.720			
SOCIAL EXPERIENCE		0.810	0.592	0.799
Through this website, I can access social networks (blogs, Facebook, Twitter) to know or express my opinion with other people.	0.764			

The website is well valued by people who use different social networks.	0.884			
Visiting this website allows me to obtain information about trends according to my attitudes and lifestyles.	0.644			
PRAGMATIC EXPERIENCE		0.859	0.552	0.867
In this website, I will obtain good quality of the products at a good price.	0.846			
In relation to the services provided (online care, guarantees), the price level is good.	0.858			
This website offers more attractive promotions and discounts than the competition.	0.645			
This website properly reports your promotions.	0.670			
This website always has stock of products in promotion.	0.656			
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE		0.960	0.802	0.959
When I buy on this website, I feel happy.	0.882			
When I buy on this website, I feel excited.	0.904			
When I buy on this website, I feel entertained.	0.854			
When I buy on this website, I feel encouraged.	0.920			
When I buy on this website, I feel excited.	0.937			
When I buy on this website, I am surprised.	0.864			
ATTITUDINAL LOYALTY		0.931	0.696	0.939
I will say positive things about this website to other people.	0.934			
I will recommend this website to family, friends, or acquaintances who ask me for advice.	0.946			
I will encourage others to go to this website.	0.877			
My intention is to continue shopping on this website in the future.	0.849			
If I had to choose again, I would select this website.	0.835			
Although other new alternatives arise, I will not give up buying on this website.	0.675			

Table 3

Discriminant validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Visual experience	0.543^A					
2. Intellectual experience	0.325 ^B	0.590				
3. Social experience	0.213	0.205	0.592			
4. Pragmatic experience	0.300	0.330	0.356	0.552		
5. Emotional experience	0.010	0.024	0.016	0.043	0.802	
6. Attitudinal loyalty	0.252	0.258	0.248	0.474	0.131	0.696

^A: AVE of each factor.

^B: Squared correlations between pairs of factors.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

When considering systems of structural equations, it is necessary that the sample size is sufficient to be able to test hypotheses with solidity. To do this, a power test must be performed. We used a GPower software (Faul et al., 2007). This requirement (value higher than 0.80) is fulfilled by the study.

Using EQS 6.2, the structural model results shown in Table 4 are obtained. The goodness indices of the adjustment are within the limits allowed by the literature (BBNNFI =

0.902, IFI = 0.917, CFI = 0.916, RMSEA = 0.068). The visual experience (H1a: $\beta_{1a} = 0.125$), the intellectual experience (H1b: $\beta_{1b} = 0.156$), and the pragmatic experience (H1d: $\beta_{1d} = 0.178$) affect emotional experience. The relationships between five different types of experiences and attitudinal loyalty are almost in accordance with our hypotheses. It is observed that attitudinal loyalty is directly affected by visual experience (H2a: $\beta_{2a} = 0.157$), intellectual experience (H2b: $\beta_{2b} = 0.074$), social experience (H2c: $\beta_{2c} = 0.147$), pragmatic experience (H2d: $\beta_{2d} = 0.528$), and emotional experience (H2e: $\beta_{2e} = 0.260$). As for behavioral loyalty, only the emotional experience has a direct and positive impact. (H3e: $\beta_{3e} = 0.099$) and attitudinal loyalty (H4: $\beta_4 = 0.120$).

Table 4

Model fit and structural coefficients

HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS	T-VALUE	ESTIMATE COEFFICIENTS	SUPPORTED
H1a: Visual experience → Emotional experience	2.824**	0.125	Yes
H1b: Intellectual experience → Emotional experience	3.424***	0.156	Yes
H1c: Social experience → Emotional experience	ns	ns	No
H1d: Pragmatic experience → Emotional experience	3.639***	0.178	Yes
H2a: Visual experience → Attitudinal loyalty	3.777***	0.157	Yes
H2b: Intellectual experience → Attitudinal loyalty	1.972*	0.074	Yes
H2c: Social experience → Attitudinal loyalty	3.746***	0.147	Yes
H2d: Pragmatic experience → Attitudinal loyalty	10.475***	0.528	Yes
H2e: Emotional experience → Attitudinal loyalty	5.283***	0.260	Yes
H3a: Visual experience → Behavioral loyalty	ns	ns	No
H3b: Intellectual experience → Behavioral loyalty	ns	ns	No
H3c: Social experience → Behavioral loyalty	ns	ns	No
H3d: Pragmatic experience → Behavioral loyalty	ns	ns	No
H3e: Emotional experience → Behavioral loyalty	1.978*	0.099	Yes
H6: Attitudinal loyalty → Behavioral loyalty	1.983*	0.120	Yes

* = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$; ns: not significant

Furthermore, the study provides consumers' perceptions for each experience dimension and sector analyzed (Table 5).

Table 5

Survey's results: main shopping experiences in each sector.

	CONSUMERS' EXPERIENCE				
	Visual	Intellectual	Social	Pragmatic	Emotional
Clothing stores and fashion					

Shoes					
Cosmetics and perfumery					
Jewelry					
Sports					
Electronics					
Decoration					
Bookstores					
Toys					

The emotional experience is present mainly in the online clothing stores and fashion, shoes, and toys sectors. In the online toy sector, all types of consumer experiences predominate, while in decoration only the social experience predominates, and in cosmetics and perfumery, the pragmatic experience does. The online clothing stores and fashion and shoes sector are perceived as retailers that offer an emotional experience and an experience linked to both the visual design of the website and the intellectual experience. In the electronics sector and bookstores, the perceived experiences are related to the intellectual, social, and pragmatic. Finally, the jewelry sector is characterized by the presence of visual, intellectual, and social experiences.

4.3. Mediation test of emotional experience

After estimating the direct effects, the authors analyzed the indirect effects using the bootstrap procedure described by Preacher and Hayes (2004) and implemented in the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2013). Table 6 shows the indirect effects, standard errors, and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained by applying bootstrap estimation. Regarding attitudinal loyalty, three of the four indirect effects studied are statistically significant (i.e., different from zero in the population), as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of their estimates does not contain zero. Thus, as the direct effect of (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, and (d) pragmatic experience on attitudinal loyalty is

significant, the authors concluded that emotional experience is a partial mediator of the impact of customer experiences on attitudinal loyalty. On the other hand, emotional experience does not act as a mediator in the relationship between social experience and attitudinal loyalty, since it does not meet condition 1 of Holmeck (1997) and Kenny et al. (1998) (the explanatory variables must influence the mediating variable).

Regarding behavioral loyalty, the four indirect effects studied are statistically significant, as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of their estimates does not contain zero. Thus, as the direct effect of (a) visual experience, (b) intellectual experience, (c) social experience, and (d) pragmatic experience on behavioral loyalty is not significant, the authors concluded that emotional experience fully mediates the impact of customer experiences on behavioral loyalty.

Table 6

Assessing the indirect effects

MEDIATION EFFECTS	DIRECT EFFECT	INDIRECT EFFECT	STANDARD ERROR	95% BIAS-CORRECTED CI	RESULT
H4a: VE → EE → AL	Significant	0.0358	0.0160	[0.0048;0.0681]	Partial mediation
H4b: IE → EE → AL	Significant	0.0524	0.0156	[0.0226;0.0840]	Partial mediation
H4c: SE → EE → AL	Significant	Not significant	0.0197	[-0.0126;0.0788]	Not mediation
H4d: PE → EE → AL	Significant	0.0638	0.0151	[0.0347;0.0949]	Partial mediation
H5a: VE → EE → BL	Not significant	0.0135	0.0070	[0.0014;0.0286]	Full mediation
H5b: IE → EE → BL	Not significant	0.0194	0.0075	[0.0060;0.0356]	Full mediation
H5c: SE → EE → BL	Not significant	0.0172	0.0075	[0.0039;0.0329]	Full mediation
H5d: PE → EE → BL	Not significant	0.0244	0.0091	[0.0071;0.0428]	Full mediation

VE: visual experience; IE: intellectual experience; SE: social experience; PE: pragmatic experience; EE: emotional experience; AL: attitudinal loyalty; BL: behavioral loyalty

4.4. Moderation test of the relationship between experience dimensions and customer loyalty

To analyze the moderating effects of website trustworthiness, the authors used the bootstrap procedure described by Preacher and Hayes (2004) and implemented in the SPSS

macro developed by Hayes (2013). The results of model 1 (Table 7) showed that although website trustworthiness does not influence the relationship between visual experience and attitudinal loyalty ($\beta_{7a} = -0.0644$; $p = 0.0602$), such website trustworthiness had a negative direct effect on the relationship between intellectual experience ($\beta_{7b} = -0.0758$; $p = 0.0309$), social experience ($\beta_{7c} = -0.0858$; $p = 0.0318$), pragmatic experience ($\beta_{7d} = -0.0754$; $p = 0.0010$), emotional experience ($\beta_{7e} = -0.0880$; $p = 0.0008$), and attitudinal loyalty. Thus, H7 is partially supported (H7b, H7c, H7d, and H7e are statistically significant with negative sign).

Table 7
Moderation bootstrapping results for website trustworthiness

STRUCTURAL PATH	ESTIMATE COEFFICIENTS	STANDARD ERROR	P-VALUE	95% BIAS-CORRECTED CI	RESULT
H7a: VE x WT → AL	-0.0644	0.0342	0.0602	[-0.1316;0.0028]	Not supported
H7b: IE x WT → AL	-0.0758	0.0350	0.0309	[-0.1445;-0.0070]	Supported
H7c: SE x WT → AL	-0.0858	0.0318	0.0071	[-0.1482;-0.0234]	Supported
H7d: PE x WT → AL	-0.0754	0.0227	0.0010	[-0.1200;-0.0308]	Supported
H7e: EE x WT → AL	-0.0880	0.0261	0.0008	[-0.1393;-0.0366]	Supported

VE: visual experience; IE: intellectual experience; SE: social experience; PE: pragmatic experience; EE: emotional experience; WB: website trustworthiness; AL: attitudinal loyalty

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical contributions

The consumer of today seeks to enjoy him/herself during shopping more than ever before. They are much more demanding, more connected and they end up more distracted than ever. Consumers currently do not have enough time even to make purchases. That is why, in the shopping time, the retailer must allow consumers to enjoy and get away from their daily routine. The generation of experiences at the website facilitates this task to retailers. Streamlining the purchase process, so that the consumer sees it as unique and unrepeatably, can encourage the creation of a special bond with the consumer. In this way, retailers can gain real fans instead of simple customers.

There is a lot of literature that identifies different dimensions of the online experience, but there is not much research that links the different dimensions of experience with attitudinal loyalty, and none that relates the dimensions of experience with behavioral loyalty. Applied to e-commerce, there are fewer investigations on the subject. The main contribution of this research is the identification of the experiences with the greatest impact on e-loyalty. To do this, the online customer experience has been considered as a subjective response of management stimuli, controllable by the retailer. In line with the literature review, this research considers the generation of experiences complex, and that includes more than one dimension. Thus, different experiences grouped into categories are identified: visual, intellectual, social, and pragmatic. It is important to identify what types of experiences the consumer values the most in order to stimulate this type of experience and get loyal consumers.

Our research proposed that all dimensions of online experience positive influence consumer attitudinal loyalty, especially pragmatic experience, such as creating a web page in which the desired products can be easily located or offering discounts for a limited time. However, all the factors are relevant to gain loyal customers. In addition, promoting intellectual experience can lead to greater consumer behavioral loyalty, manifested in their spending on the web. Thus, it is clear how important it is today to carry out experiential marketing activities, given that they influence not only the attitudinal loyalty, but also the level of spending. This is especially relevant nowadays. Given that consumers have little time to make their purchases, it is essential to design a website that appeals to them and that makes them want to spend more on this site.

Finally, we proposed that website trustworthiness that the consumer perceives (high level or low level) moderates the relationship between the dimensions of the online shopping

experience and attitudinal loyalty. The conclusions obtained indicate that the intellectual, social, pragmatic, and emotional experiences have a stronger influence on attitudinal loyalty in consumers with a low level of website trustworthiness.

5.2. Managerial implications

This study offers interesting lessons for online retail companies that wish to develop experience marketing. Firstly, marketers must stimulate the senses of consumer, because this enhances their attitudinal loyalty. Manipulating the design of the website, thereby allowing consumers to enjoy the visit, can lead the consumers to revisit the website or recommend it. Creating a pleasant shopping environment allows consumers to have a pleasant time. In online commerce, the visual design of the website is essential to attract consumers.

Secondly, it can be interesting to create an atmosphere that awakens the curiosity of the consumer and in which creative thoughts can be developed. In the post-COVID era it will be essential to provide consumers with more information, so that returns from online commerce are minimized. One way to provide a more detailed description of the products can be augmented reality. For example, the use of smart dressing rooms could break the barrier that currently exists in the fashion sector, where the consumer does not really know if the product will fit well. The development of this type of experience is fascinating, since it is empirically demonstrated that it is the only experience that has direct effects on behavioral loyalty.

In a context of online shopping, the consumer is still social. Simply, relationships with other consumers or with store employees change. It is interesting for an online retailer to create experiences that facilitate interaction between customers, such as creating brand communities, where consumers can share common interests, or paying special attention to the response to consumers in social networks. Paying attention to these actions, which surprise and interest consumers, can increase their loyalty, turning them into true fans of the website.

However, it should not be forgotten that the consumer also demands functionality and a good offer of products, which is attractive in terms of price. Receiving the product in the shortest time possible and with the least effort is a desired aspect for consumers who shop online. This can be a good way to gain loyal customers.

This study encourages retailers to create virtual stores that make people happier. Emotional experience is essential to obtain good business results, since it is the experience dimension that most greatly influence attitudinal loyalty, and also act as a mediator between other shopping experiences and behavioral loyalty.

Currently, consumption has become a form of leisure, so shopping is increasingly emotional and tends to be enjoyed during the act of information and/or purchase. If the retailer wants to enhance the effect of experiences on consumer loyalty, a good way to do it would be to excite the consumer.

5.3. Limitations and future research

For future studies, some of the limitations present in this research could be taken as a starting point. Firstly, shopping experiences are evaluated retrospectively, using consumers' memory without taking into account the dynamic nature of the experience. Regarding the measure of emotional experience, it would be interesting to measure that experience just at the moment when emotions are experienced. For example, using neuromarketing techniques applied to commercial experimentation. Today, it is possible to recreate shopping environments that stimulate certain shopping experiences, and measure reactions to those experiences. Secondly, it would be interesting to analyze the possible influence of the different dimensions of the online shopping experience on variables that are currently relevant in the literature, such as customer engagement. It could also be interesting to analyze the conceptual model for different customer segments obtained based on the shopping motivation

and their psychographic characteristics, among other aspects. Finally, the information is limited to Spain, which places constraints on any generalization of the model to other geographic and cultural spaces. It would be interesting to replicate this study in other countries, with different cultures, or in another shopping environment (e.g., applied to offline commerce or shopping centers).

6. Conclusion

This study is based on the S-O-R model to propose an empirical model in which online shopping experiences and consumer behavior are related. To do this, a survey was conducted of online consumers in the retail sector (N = 496), in which they recorded their perceptions of different dimensions of an online experience and indicated their attitudinal and behavioral intentions. The empirical results suggest that to activate emotional states in the consumer retailers must promote experiences of a pragmatic, intellectual, and visual type. For example, designing the web page in such a way that the products can be interacted with, and creativity and imagination are fostered, or causing customers to feel good about buying a cheaper product or a product with better value for money. If the retailer seeks to achieve the loyalty of its consumers, developing an experiential marketing strategy can be a good idea, since it has been shown that all the experiences analyzed directly influence attitudinal loyalty, especially the pragmatic and emotional experience. It is precisely this emotional experience that has a direct influence on behavioral loyalty, along with behavioral loyalty. It is about the consumer enjoying the act of purchase and considering it an end in itself, not the means to an end (buying a product or service).

As a complement, the relationships between the dimensions of the shopping experience and attitudinal loyalty by consumer segments have been analyzed, based on the level of

trustworthiness that consumers perceive about the website. The conclusions obtained indicate that, with the exception of the visual experience, the dimensions of the online experience analyzed have a stronger influence on attitudinal loyalty for those consumers who show less trustworthiness in the retailer's website. Thus, online retailers with highly trustworthy websites benefit from more visual experiences, while less trustworthy ones benefit from more creative, emotional, and pragmatic experiences.

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