Predicting online customer engagement: A case Study of Saeed Ajmal Stores

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Abstract

Today, the technological advancement which makes our lives easier and faster is the consequence of E-tailing. In Pakistan, the e-commerce concept is growing very fast, but limited researches have documented various factors which help to foster online consumer engagement. This study was planned to examine online consumer engagement of customers towards online shopping from Saeed Ajmal Online stores. The target population was customers that visited Saeed Ajmal Online Store and resident of Faisalabad City. Respondents were contacted through the Facebook account that is associated with Saeed Ajmal Online Store. Useable responses were 200 after data screening. Outcomes of this study showed that website quality, brand experience, brand familiarity played a role to develop e-trust, which led to customer engagement. However, partial mediation of e-trust was found in developing online customer engagement. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

Keywords: e-tail quality, e-trust, online brand engagement.

Introduction

Nowadays, creating online experience of a customer in terms of a brand is becoming an essential driver for electronic performance. The Brands that sell their products online known as electronic tailers (e-tailers). The online brands since last 15 years have grown from the obscurity to the household names having higher market values that help the brands to be among top 100 most valuable brands in the world (Liao, Rebecca Yen, & Li, 2011). The concept of internet traffic has been increased, indicating the repeated interactions between the customers and online brands, that is a crucial asset for the success of social media online networks (Song, Zhang, Xu, &

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Huang, 2010). However, the online brands consider that maintenance of active engagement through repeated interactions with the users is a critical issue that leads to the success or failure of electronic trust (e-trust) among the customers (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008) Therefore, this game of success or failure of electronic trust needs a vital consideration.

Most importantly, e-companies must understandthe psychological aspects that influence the purchase intention through e-trust.The shopping in terms of purchasing through internet is growing rapidly and the rates of sales growth through internet is outpacing the buying through traditional mechanisms of retailing (Ha & Perks, 2005). Such environment has opened doors for rapid entry of new brands in the market that are unique in using innovative web technology and leads the customers to various experiences in online shopping (Keeney, 1999).

Saeed Ajmal Store is a clothing brand in Pakistan, founded by International Cricketer Saeed Ajmal in 2016. It is a joint venture of Saeed Ajmal and Cozy International having six outlets in different cities of Pakistan along with online shopping facility for customers. Saeed Ajmal Stores deal in Menswear & Kids garments and footwear collection. In B2C form of business marketing, like Saeed Ajmal Store whose four essential elements impact online purchase intention is considered as website design, information content, privacy, and security. However, these elements are also considered as the barriers to purchasing intention of buyers or consumers (Doolin, Dillon, Thompson, & Corner, 2005).Yoon (2002) concluded that people feel reluctant to make online purchases due to multiple reasons. Thus, the study proposed that if customers are already familiar with a brand (Brand familiarity) and have an experience of purchasing that brand from a physical outlet (Brand experience), that ultimately generate trust (e-trust) and the probability of online consumer engagement. The current research is unique in terms of dealing with the e-commerce arena in developing economies.

Literature Review
Inarguably, various shopping experiences are experienced by customers because of online and offline environments even in the repurchase of same products. The interaction with online brands by the customers is ensued across assorted range of activities that leads to diverse behaviors and experiences. Online brand experience (BE) has diverse conceptualizations that captures the online customers experience of a brand, such as experience in online environments

(Novak et al., 2000), experience of internet (Nysveen& Pedersen, 2004), experience of website brand (Ha & Perks, 2005), experience of total consumer (Petre, Minocha, & Roberts, 2006) and online experience (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008).

The social psychology theory argued that brand relationship is a communication that is supported by literature (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). The consumers that generate deep brand relationships are actively involved in the process of two-way communication that deals with receiving and providing information.

E-trust

Trust is regarded as having ultimate importance in any transaction of the business, and it is the most universally accepted term that indicates the human interaction of exchange.E-trust is also an essential factor for customers in terms of credibility and benevolence in online purchasing patterns and decision-making processes (Nadeem et al., 2015).Another essential aspect that influences the trust factor in e-tailing is online peer recommendations, and such recommendations also alter the purchasing intentions of customers (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Accordingly, people are more likely to consider other customers' information rather than companies to develop their e-trust (Dabholkar & Sheng, 2012).

The e-tailers to mostly focus on their website service quality and their enhancement as well as understanding online peer recommendations phenomenon (Fikir, Yaz, & Özyer, 2010). Particularly in terms of social media interactions between customers and online retailers as they are most influences sources that influence the purchasing decisions of customers online (Kim, Xu, & Koh, 2004). This environment is opening doors to another form of online commerce, named as social commerce that depends on features of social networks for enhancing the shopping experience of customers online. The social commerce is imperative in affecting e-trust as well (Kim & Park, 2013).

Online Consumer Engagement

Online consumer engagement (CE) is interactive, and co-creative experiences of the customers with retailers online or offline that leads to a precise psychological state of customers and identify the intention of customers in purchasing patterns (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, &Ilić, 2011).Practitioner conceptualizes the perspective of organization in online consumer engagement, and it elaborates the activities that facilitate the repeated interactions between the online

retailer and customer for strengthening physical, psychological and emotional investment of a customer in a brand (Vivek, Beatty, &Morgan, 2012). On the contrary, academicians considered online consumer engagement as the participation intensity of customer with online retailers as well as with other customers in the process of collaborative knowledge exchange (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2006).

E-tail quality

Websites are the source of information repositories for customers by online retailers and offer transaction capabilities mechanism to serve online consumers.Various viewpoints have developed multiple scales to measure e-tail quality along with various dimensions for assessment of quality. Web-Qual focused on various dimensions of e-tail quality to measure the aspect, like trust, visual appeal, interactivity, information, fit-to-task, and response time. (Loiacono et al., 2002).In the current study, e-tail or website service quality is conceptualized as the evaluation process of the customer as well as the interaction's outcome quality of customers with online retailers (Gummerus et al., 2004).

E-tail quality (eTailQ) was significant in its features for measuring the e-tail experience quality (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). Therefore, various dimensions have been proposed by various authors to measure website service quality, along with multiple scales to measure the respective construct. Overall, website service quality is quite crucial for creating online trust in consumers that ultimately leads to the engagement of consumers in purchasing the products (Loiacono et al., 2002). Based on these perspectives, the current study proposes that:

H_1: E-Trust mediates the relationship of e-tail quality and online consumer engagement at Saeed Ajmal Online Store

Brand Experience

Experience is as the high degree of familiarity displayed by the customers with a particular subject area, and this experience is obtained through exposure (Braunsberger& Munch, 1998).In this regard, the main goal of brand experience is the establishment of an affirmative bond between a customer and a precise brand so that customers get knowledge of the brand, but eventually, this happens where customers get a positive experience.Various studies have investigated the association of brand experience online with

familiarity factor as well as the satisfaction of customers with website communities (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

Brand experiences are also indicated by the subjective and intrinsic responses of customers in terms of feelings, sensations and cognitions and the behavioral responses of customers evoked by stimuli of brands, such as identity, communications, packaging, environments, or design (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Such evaluation acts as a pre-evaluation for repurchase. It leads to the development of loyalty when the customers adopt repurchasing behavior over time due to their experiences (Erciş, Ünal, Candan, & Yıldırım, 2012). The understanding of brand experience by the customers now seems to be crucial for marketing practitioners in order to develop marketing strategies for their e-commerce landscapes (Chattopadhyay & Laborie,2005). Based on these perspectives, the current study proposed:

H₂: E-Trust mediates the relationship of brand experience and online consumer engagement at Saeed Ajmal Online Store

Brand Familiarity
The familiarity of customers with a brand stems the number of customer experiences towards a brand. This behavior is more closely related to definite brand familiarity. Logically it is assumed that higher brand familiarity induces the feelings of trust or greater satisfaction in customers, except the case of negative brand perceptions in the mind of customers. However, brand trust indicated brand familiarity to be a critical indicator (Nadeem et al., 2015).
Consumer intends to be more familiar with a brand that is more likely to stay around for longer, and these brands intend to reinforce their reputations through brand experience (Pae, Samiee, & Tai, 2002). On the contrary, the interaction between surface properties of brand and depth of customer's shopping task impacts relative value perceptions, such as entertainment, visual appeal, or service excellence. Based on these perspectives, the current study proposed:

H₃: E-Trust mediates the relationship of brand familiarity and online consumer engagement at Saeed Ajmal Online Store

Methodology
This study followed a cross-sectional research design, and data was collected through questionnaire from customers of Saeed Ajmal online stores. In the first phase of the study, administration of Saeed Ajmal store was requested to provide user details of their Facebook

page followers. Later on, these users were approached through personal contacts, and after their consent to participate in the survey, they were asked to fill the questionnaire. They were assured regarding the confidentiality of their feedback, and it was ensured to them that their responses would only be used for educational purpose. For this purpose, already established questionnaires were used to develop a scale. Data were collected on 5-point Likert Scale. In order to assess the perception of customers regarding Website service quality, a scale consisting of 14 items was used.For the assessment of Brand experience, 5 items scale was used.

Similarly, Brand familiarity was measured through four items scale. The mediating variable, electronic trust, was assessed through six items scale. Finally, the dependent variable of this study (online consumer engagement) was measured through six items scale. Total of 250 questionnaires was distributed, and 200useable questionnaires were received back. Reliability of the instrument was assessed through Cronbach alpha for internal consistency. All the values of reliability statistics against each variable were above the threshold values (Reported in table 1). Data were analyzed by using SPSS 23. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Nature and direction of the relationships among the constructs were assessed based on Pearson correlation while multiple regressions have been used to draw inference regarding the population based on sample characteristics.

Results

Demographic characteristics of respondents that majority of the respondents are 19-24 years, 65 respondents belong to the age of 25-35 years, and 129 respondents were single. The employment status showed that 48.5% of respondents are the student. 71 respondents are not interested in providing information regarding monthly income. However, 30% of respondents have a monthly income of 25,000 PKR - 49,000 PKR. Moreover, 145 (72.5%) respondents are using Facebook to search Saeed Ajmal Online Store, 17 (8.5%) respondents use Instagram to search Saeed Ajmal Online Store and 38 (19%) respondents use both social media Platforms. 31% respondent visit Saeed Ajmal Online Stories once a month, and 44.5% of respondents visit the store once a week.

Table-1 Respondents Demographics (Sample Size-200)

Particulars	Freq.	%age	Particulars	Freq.	%age
Age in Years					
19-24	98	49%	35-44	26	13%
25-35	65	32.5%	Above 45	11	5%
Status					
Married	71	35.5%	Single	129	64.9%
Employment Status					
Student	97	48.5%	Government Employee	23	11.5%
Businessman	40	20%	Private Employee	40	20%
Monthly income in PKR					
Not interested	71	35.5%	Below 25,000	29	14.5%
25,000 - 49,000	59	29.5%	50,000 - 100,000	28	14%
Above 100,000	13	6.5%			
Social Media Account using for Searching Saeed Ajmal Online Stores					
Facebook	145	72.5%	Instagram	17	8.5%
Both	38	19%			
Number of Times respondent Visited the Store					
Once a month	62	31%	Weekly	89	44.5%
Two Times in a Week	28	14%	Three Times a Week	14	7%
Daily	7	3.5%			

Descriptive statistics (table-2) illustrate that the average response of website service quality (Predictor) was 3.7689, which showed that most of the respondents reported against "Agree." Standard deviation against this variable was .629. Same as that, the average response of brand Experience (independent) was 4.0220, which showed that most of the respondents reported "Agree" standard deviation against this variable was 0.663. The average response of brand familiarity (independent variable) was 3.8163, which showed that most of the respondents reported against "Agree." Standard deviation against this variable was 0.739. Correlation values between website service quality and online consumer engagement are .289, brand experience and online consumer engagement is .280 and brand familiarity, and online consumer engagement is .316 which implied that increase in website service quality, brand experience, and brand familiarity would also increase in online consumer engagement.

Table-2. Mean, S.D, Alpha values, and correlation matrix

	Mean	Std. Dev	WQ	BE	BF	ET	CE
WQ	3.76	.629	.849				
BE	4.02	.663	.342**	.693			
BF	3.81	.738	.380**	.274**	.651		
ET	3.51	.756	.453**	.137	.471**	.826	
CE	3.92	.839	.289**	.280**	.316**	.374**	.866

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
WQ=Web Quality, BE= Brand Experience, BF=Brand Familiarity, ET=Electronic Trust, CE=Online consumer engagement

Table-3. Multiple regression analysis

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Predicator		
e-tail quality(web quality)	0.386* (0.091)	0.201* (0.098)
Mediator		
Electronic trust		0.341*(0.081)
Adjusted R^2	0.08	0.15
Overall Model F	18.08	18.49

Dependent variable: Online Customer engagement
*: significant at 5 %
Values in Parentheses are standard error

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Predicator		
Brand Experience	0.354* (0.086)	0.295* (0.082)
Mediator		
Electronic trust		0.380*(0.072)
Adjusted R^2	0.07	0.18
Overall Model F	16.83	23.59

Dependent variable: Online Customer engagement
*: significant at 5 %
Values in Parentheses are standard error

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Predicator		
Brand Familiarity	0.354* (0.086)	0.295* (0.082)
Mediator		
Electronic trust		0.380*(0.072)
Adjusted R^2	0.07	0.18
Overall Model F	16.83	23.59

Dependent variable: Online Customer engagement

Discussion, Findings, Conclusion and Future Research Directions
Indeed, the cross-examination for existing spate of literature related to brand management indicates that many studies in these areas mostly focus on socialization, user-derived benefits, sentimentality,

trust, brand commitment, satisfaction, superior marketing attributes, aesthetic attractiveness, delight and self-concept connection as the antecedents of brand attachment (Grisaffe& Nguyen, 2011).

Research evidence indicates that the need of information search is reduced due to familiarity factor. E-tailers are mostly concerned about the issues of online trust that are interested in establishing long-term healthy online relationships with customers (Ruiz-Mafe, Martí-Parreño, & Sanz-Blas, 2014).Similarly, many information sources also undermine the e-trust factor due to distract and disorient the behavior of customers. Consumer behavior has stressed the vital role of e-trust in order to stimulate the favorable responses regarding any online medium to be used in upcoming future (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2014).

Online consumer engagement in a seller-buyer relationship requires the establishment of commitment and trust, and this trust is more required in e-commerce platforms (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). The absent of e-trust makes the relation unlikely to be intimate or enduring.

These findings are in connection with the already conducted by previous researchers (Kim & Stoel, 2004; Gummerus et al., 2004). It has been proved that electronic trust mediates the relationship between website service quality and online consumer engagement. Hence, These findings are in connection with previous researchers (Loiacono et al., 2002). Further, it has also been proved that electronic trust mediates the relationship between brand experience and online consumer engagement. These findings are in connection with the already conducted by previous researchers (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Erciş et al., 2012).

Empirically, it has been found that e-tail or website service quality has a significant impact on online consumer engagement, along with that, e-trust mediate the relationship of website service quality and online consumer engagement.The e-trust also mediate the relationship between brand experience and online consumer engagement.Electronic trust mediates the relationship of brand familiarity and online consumer engagement with significant impact. Finally, electronic trust has been a significant impact on online consumer engagement.

It is concluded that the online customers of Saeed Ajmal Stores are influenced by website service quality (WQ).Secondly, brand experience (BE) positively influences the customers of Saeed Ajmal Stores, which shows that customers who physically aware of

the brand are more influenced to shopping online from thisbrand. Brand familiarity (BF) has been positively impacted by online consumer engagement. The online customers of Saeed Ajmal Stores are likely more interested and comfortable with shopping online if they are well familiar with the brand.In this study, it proved that increased e-trust positively affect online consumer engagement. The first limitation of this was, the respondents were from the one city only from nearly available Saeed Ajmal Stores only. Thus, expanding the circle of respondents might provide essential insights in the future. Another limitation of the study was that only one online brand was studied in this research.This study was on Saeed Ajmal Stores, in which Saeed Ajmal is an International Cricketer and celebrity. So, celebrity endorsement might affect the variables of the study.

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