

Chapter 14

Offline and Online Customer Satisfaction in B2C Markets: Towards an Overall Customer Satisfaction Framework

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ABSTRACT

The chapter by Aquilani, Serpico, Silvestri, and Ruggieri explores online and offline customer satisfaction in B2C markets. The authors emphasize that building strong relationships with customers is of even higher strategic relevance in dynamic and competitive environments implying that firms must continuously work towards ever higher levels of experienced customer satisfaction. The objectives of this conceptual work are threefold: (1) to review customer satisfaction studies in both offline and online environments and their relationships with customer relationship management both offline and online, (2) to analyze tools and methods already used to measure it, and (3) to propose a new and comprehensive theoretical framework that helps evaluate overall customer satisfaction. The framework considers both offline and online customer satisfaction antecedents, being aware of the different weight and effects they have on e-customer satisfaction. This depends on the context in which they have been created and previously applied to, as well as considering the website as a moderator in the relationship between offline antecedents of customer satisfaction (prior experience, brand, quality, price, etc.) and overall customer satisfaction. Thus, the latter would come from both offline antecedents of customers' satisfaction and website quality dimensions, namely information, services, and system quality.

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INTRODUCTION

A famous quote of John Chambers (CEO of Cisco Systems) “Put your customer at the center of your culture” highlights the importance of successfully building strong relationships with customers, where customer centric marketing concepts (RM, CRM, CKM, Behavioral Branding and Cause Related Marketing) are essential. The final goal firms must take into account is continuously satisfying customer needs and desires, creating and supporting even higher brand or product loyalty levels, through even higher customer satisfaction (CS). Because of its great importance, CS and its features in the offline environment have been studied by researchers worldwide (e.g., Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Mohr & Speckman, 1994; Jones & Sasser Jr., 1995; Kumar, 1996; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld & Scheffer, 2000; Costabile, 2001).

The advent of Web 2.0 and the pervasive role that it progressively occupies in firm CRM strategies has called for a new research area: the e-CS.

Recently different aspects of e-CS have been studied: its value in building strong online relationships with customers, its antecedents and drivers, some new scales and tools to measure specially e-CS, different from those created to measure offline CS, its impact on other variables such as repurchase intention, e-loyalty, complaint and recovery behaviors, etc. (see the different paragraphs of the second section of the chapter). From these contributions it is clear that further studies should be developed in each of these areas, but also none of the authors has developed a comprehensive framework which simultaneously considers on the one hand the direct impact of offline drivers and website features on overall customer satisfaction (OCS), and on the other, the moderator effect the website has on offline antecedents of CS. Thus, we aim to fill this gap in literature.

The chapter is organized as follows. The first section discusses the offline literature distinguishing between the relationship between CS and customer relationship management (CRM),

the concept of CS, its measurement tools and methodologies, which have drastically changed over the years.

The second section reviews the literature on the relationship between e-CS and e-CRM, the concept of e-CS, its drivers and effects and the tools used over the years to measure it.

The third describes the proposed framework of overall customer satisfaction developed from B2C markets. We conclude suggesting further future research avenues, and draw some conclusions.

OFFLINE LITERATURE REVIEW

CRM and Its Relationship with Customer Satisfaction (CS)

Today companies face fiercer competition than in the past. However, the shift from a product and selling philosophy to a marketing philosophy offers major competitive opportunities (Kotler, 2007). A well planned marketing orientation is the first step for building a long term relationship with customers and it implies keeping customers informed and providing them with appropriate stimuli. Customer-focused companies are expert at both defining products and developing the marketplace (Costabile, 2001; Kotler, 2007; Wind et al., 2002), but in an extremely dynamic context anticipating customers needs is the key for making marketing decisions (Guatri, 1991, 1997; Valdani 1995; Busacca, 2003; Al-Zubi et al., 2012; Angelova & Zekiri, 2011; Sun & Kim, 2013). This new customer-based view does not just concern marketing policies or market analysis techniques, it implies the alignment of the whole business system with expressed needs of customers (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Grönroos, 1994, 2000, 2002; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2003, 2006; Terpestra et. al, 2013). This concept was clearly and effectively summarized by John Chambers, Cisco System’s CEO, who stated that the customer should be at the centre of business

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