The Role of 3D Product Presentation in Enhancing Virtual Experience Realms:
The Case of Consumer Responses towards Online Apparel Retailers

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INTRODUCTION

Previous research on e-commerce (Algharabat & Shatnawi, 2014; Algharabat & Zamil, 2013; Elliott & Speck, 2005; Liu & Arnett, 2000; Lohse et al., 2000) posit the importance of development in internet technology which often facilitate the development in product offerings, website designs, service quality, information quality and system quality which as a result enhanced the usefulness, security, playfulness and ease of use of websites.

E-commerce sales in the Middle East continue to grow (Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014). Therefore, the estimated number of internet users in the Middle East reached 90 Million by 2013 (Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014). Accordingly, Jordan is one of the Middle East countries which has 69% penetration rate for internet usage in 2013 (Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014). Furthermore, the size of e-shopping in Jordan is increasing since Jordan is characterized with a high percentage of youth (Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014).

In an attempt to create distinguished online consumers' experiences, e-retailers continue to improve and differentiate their website features to affect how users feel, think and do toward online products and/or websites stores (Hess, 2005; Lohse et al., 2000; Fiore et al., 2005a, b). In particular, online retailers employ three dimensional (3D) technology and visual images to enhance consumer responses such as hedonic values (Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen, 2013; Algharabat & Dennis, 2010b), utilitarian values (Algharabat & Dennis, 2012; Algharabat & Dennis, 2010b; Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen, 2013; Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014), trust (Algharabat, 2014c) and satisfaction (Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen, 2013; Algharabat & Zamil, 2013).

The nature of engaging experiences explained by Pine and Gilmore's (1999) findings which posit that consumption experiences are enhanced by entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic experiences (4Es). Based on the different types of experiences (such as feel, think and do), e-shoppers expect to engage in such experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Postrel, 2003). This suggests that, for 3D product presentation to facilitate consumer's experiences, more attention should be placed on website features in order to facilitate purchase decisions and to achieve an enjoyable shopping.

Therefore, this chapter aims to link the impact of 3D product virtual experience on consumption engaging experiences (4Es; entertainment, educational, escapist, and esthetic experiences) which in turn impacts product knowledge and experiential values.

BACKGROUND

3D Product Experience

Algharabat (2014a) defines virtual product experience which derived from navigating 3D product presentations "a virtual online experience that users can have while navigating a 3D product presentation, which aims to simulate direct product experiences (i.e., conventional in-store experience) and often enhances diagnosticity, authenticity, compatibility, flow and enjoyment" (p. 302). Furthermore, Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen (2013) define 3D product experience as "psychological state in which virtual objects presented in 3D are perceived by consumers as actual objects, which convey to customers relevant product information that helps them in understanding and evaluating the quality and performance of products sold online" (p. 246). Furthermore, previous research on 3D product experience (Algharabat, 2014a, b, c; Algharabat & Dennis, 2010a, b, c; Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen, 2013; Algharabat & Shatanawi, 2014; Algharabat & Zamil, 2013) posit the importance of 3D product experience to enhance consumers' online shopping. For example, Algharabat & Zamil (2013) assert that importance of 3D product quality as a determinant of users' trust and satisfaction. The authors assert that 3D information quality (i.e., accurate, relevant, complete and precise information) and 3D system quality (i.e., easy to use the 3D, 3D user friendly, 3D well designed to navigate, and 3D convenient to access) are the main antecedents of 3D trust and satisfaction. Algharabat & Abu-ElSamen (2013) highlight the importance of 3D to enhance consumers' feeling and trust toward electronic shopping. Algharabat & Shatanawi (2014) assert the importance of 3D-quality to reduce perceived risk. In the same context, Algharabat (2014c) posit the importance of 3D to enhance users' trust in the context of online shopping. Algharabat (2014b) examined the importance link between 3D product presentation and e-CRM. The authors find that 3D usability, 3D product presentation quality and 3D media richness positively impact 3D trust which affects site affective commitment which in turn impact attitudinal loyalty. Previous research (Klein, 2003; Li et al., 2001, 2002, 2003; Jiang & Benbasat, 2005, 2007)

Virtual Experience Realms

Pine and Gilmore (1999) posit that customer participation (active or passive) and environmental relationship (immersive or absorptive) often impact virtual experiences realms. The authors classified virtual experiences into four realms; escapist, education, esthetic, and entertainment. The authors explained that escapist virtual experience and education virtual experience belong to active participation "where customers personally affect the performance or event that yields the experience" (p. 30). While, esthetic virtual experience and entertainment virtual experience belong to passive participation "where customers do not directly affect or influence the performance" (p. 30). On the other hand, environmental relationship reflects absorption occupying a person's attention by bringing the experiences into the mind of users and immersion is becoming physically or virtually a part of the experience-producing event/performance itself (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Keng, Liao & Yang (2012) state that escapist virtual experience and esthetic virtual experience belong to immersion. While, education virtual experience and entertainment virtual experience belong to absorption.

Therefore, the 4Es (educational, entertainment, escapist, and esthetic experiences) reflecting different combinations of passive–active participation and absorption–immersion experiences. Therefore, according to previous studies (Keng et al., 2012; Jeong et al., 2009; Pine & Gilmore 1999), entertainment

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