Guest editorial

Guest editorial special section – emotions in service interactions

Consumption emotions are the set of positive and negative emotional reactions felt by consumers during product usage and service consumption (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). The role of emotions has gained the interest of both academics and practitioners as a critical element in understanding consumer behavior and consumption experience (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Han and Jeong, 2013; Mattila and Enz, 2002). Emotions influence information processing, attitudes, preferences, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, complaining behavior, and loyalty (e.g. Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Bigné *et al.*, 2008; Han and Jeong, 2013; Joireman *et al.*, 2013). The recognition of the role of emotions has increased within the development of the experiential approach, emphasizing that consumers are rational and emotional human beings motivated by the pursuit of fun and feelings.

Past research focussed mainly on the cognitive component of service experience, largely supporting the relationships between service quality, satisfaction, perceived value, and service users' behavioral intentions. However, many services researchers reported that cognitive models are limited in their ability to explain service encounter assessment (Brunner-Sperdin *et al.*, 2012; Dong and Siu, 2013). They suggest that service experience evaluation is both cognitive and emotional (Edvardsson, 2005; Han and Jeong, 2013). Favorable emotional reactions to service experience enhance service evaluation, loyalty, and recommendation, whereas negative emotional reactions increase dissatisfaction, negative word-of-mouth, complaining behavior, and exit. In some service settings (e.g. river rafting, movies, etc.), the relationships may not be valence-congruent.

Despite their valuable role in modeling consumer attitudes and behaviors in service settings, the focus on customers' emotional reactions to service encounters is currently lacking (Brunner-Sperdin *et al.* 2012; Ladhari, 2009). This special section intends to provide a few insights.

In the first paper, Carla Ruiz-Mafé *et al.* (2016) study the influences of individual and social antecedents of emotions as well as the impact of emotions on attitude and loyalty toward online travel communities. They found that perceived privacy and security risk elicit negative emotions such as stress, frustration, and fear toward the online travel community. Normative influences and feeling the presence of other community members boost positive emotions toward the online travel community. Positive and negative emotions influence attitudes toward the online travel community. Subjective norm and attitudes influence loyalty toward an online travel community. The study results confirm previous research grounded in social impact theory and theory of reasoned action.

In the second paper, Lorena Blasco-Arcas *et al.* (2016) examine the role of emotions in developing customer engagement and brand image during virtual service interactions. This study confirms that during interactions in online platform customer engagement with the firm influences brand image. Indeed, based on the P-A-D model, the study reports that pleasure and arousal experienced by customers influence their engagement with the firm while dominance influences brand image. Finally, customer engagement and brand image have a positive effect on purchase behavior.

In the third paper, Tubillejas Andrés *et al.* (2016) evaluate the influence of social servicescape and positive emotions on satisfaction, perceived value, and consumer loyalty. The study applied to hedonic service (opera) supports the direct effect of positive emotions on satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty. In addition, positive emotions strengthen the effect of the social servicescape on perceived value.

This special section covered only the role of emotions in service experience. Emotions are playing an increasing influence in consumer research, both as an antecedent that drives some effects and also as a consequence of a service interaction. Future research is encouraged to address many gaps about the role of emotions in service experiences. Among the issues that could be covered, the following constitute an agenda for future research:

- Comparison of the role of emotions in service interactions between utilitarian services (e.g. banks, fast-food restaurants, clinics, airline companies, telephone companies, hair salons) and hedonic services (e.g. hotel resorts, attending sport games, leisure, or cultural events). The understanding of the role of emotions is vital for both utilitarian consumption that is motivated by filling basic needs, and hedonic consumption that is multisensory and a pleasure-driven consumption. Most past studies were focussed on hedonic services and little interest has been devoted to the role of emotions for utilitarian service encounters.

- Combination of both cognitive judgments and consumption feelings to improve satisfaction with service experience. More studies are needed to develop comprehensive models and test theories that explain the relationships between cognitive and affective judgments in service settings.

- Transmission of emotions in a social servicescape, including employee-to-customer and customer-to-customer interactions. Many service contexts involve the presence of other consumers in the consumption environment (e.g. restaurants, cruise trips, sport events). How these interactions elicit emotional interactions is a neglected area of research.

- Relationships between service attributes and specific emotional reactions characterized by valence (positive/negative) and intensity (low/high), such as joy, happiness, delight, anger, anxiety, sadness, and frustration. For instance, future research is encouraged to examine specific emotions associated with (core and peripheral) service failure, perceived causes of service failure, and different types of service recovery strategies. The role of anger, regret, avoidance, and forgiveness may constitute a successful avenue for integrative research.

- Identification of emotional patterns associated to different satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. It would be of theoretical and practical interest to study the relationships between the elicited emotional patterns and service users' behavioral intentions.

- Evolution of the valence and intensity of emotional responses in extended service interactions (e.g. health services, hospitality services, leisure services) has received only sporadic research interest. How valence and intensity of emotions change over the duration, and at different phases of, the extended service experience? What are the relationships between the emotions experienced at different episodes along the service process?

- Development and validation of specific measurement scale of customers' emotional reactions in different service settings. Many scales have been developed to assess emotions (e.g. Emotions Profile Index, Differential Emotions Scale, Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance Model, and Consumption Emotion Set). However, emotions experienced by consumers may depend on service setting and cultural background. There, an interesting research avenue is to improve the existing scales to increase their reliability and validity in measuring emotions elicited by service consumption experiences.

- Recent developments in neuroscience must be adopted into emotion research. This growing field of research is devoting attention to consumer behavior. Furthermore, techniques that were unusual in consumer research, such as facial coding, galvanic skin response, electroencephalography, and functional magnetic resonance imaging are becoming more popular in marketing research and their usefulness in emotion research fits well. New solutions provided with a high level of integration of the measurements derived from different techniques are available nowadays (e.g. iMotions). This new approach challenges future research in consumer behavior and opens new windows for building up new relationships between emotions and behavior.

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