How the Perceptions towards e-Retailer Image Affect the e-Consumer Behavior: Factors & Procedure Involved

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Abstract- *In this research paper, the author highlighted three main elements that impacted online shoppers as an individual, in such security & privacy matters, individual behavior in relation with convenience and expectations and social influence which all will be further discussed.*

Keywords- *Perceptions; e-retaile; e-consumer Behaviour*

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many researches that brought up the importance of understanding consumer perceptions in this competitive market both in online and offline environment. Consumers` perceptions can be impacted by experienced-based site as such the segments of entertainment, resources and effectiveness shopping in e-retailer`s site (Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche, 2012). There are some elements that affect consumers` perception on e-retailers in terms of security such as, in online transactions and the reliability of sharing personal data online which reduces the willingness to participate in online transaction (Lu, Chang & Yu, 2013). Besides, the quality of e-shopping, link to e-store`s performance and its effectiveness can affect the consumer`s perceptions of the products and services offer (Ha & Stoel, 2012). An individual may have different perceptions towards the services based on the culture and experiences he gained (Ueltschy, Laroche, Eggert, Bindl, 2007). The consumers` perceptions can be influenced also through positive experience that leads to have consumer loyalty. Building customer loyalty is crucial especially in e-retailing as acquiring customers through online can be costly (Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005). Loyalty helps to reduce the costs of seeking new clients while retaining the existing ones in which creates a positive impact of the organization (Sanchez & Iniesta, 2009). On top of that customer loyalty helps to build positive effect in terms of profitability for a long-term of period (Ribbink, Riel & Streukens, 2004). It is known that perceived value has significant value to loyalty of online business, thus reframing an individual to find for alternative e-business services (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). Plus, there is a study perceived that the image of an online store can be set as an informative channel to every individual (Bezes, 2013). Based on researches that the author found, indeed there are many elements that influence consumer`s

perceptions towards e-retailer. Hence, e-retailer has to be conscious about the antecedents of the consumer acceptance of shopping in virtual world since there is a strong competition happening in e-commerce (Bonera, 2011).

2. FACTORS INVOLVED TO SHOP ON E-RETAILER

There is still uncertainty found from the customers who do online shopping compared with the traditional or offline shopping as they might have doubt and does not have the trust towards the e-retailer especially for the first- timer. Since there is no physical interaction and communication face to face with customers, e- retailer should then build a connection effectively by emphasizing the protection in personal information, understand each individual better by identifying their expectations with convenience of shopping online and strive to improve customer services through the words of mouth (WOM) that can spread faster, easily and much reliable sources.

2.1 Security & Privacy matters

It is a norm that customer feared of sharing their information to e-retailer simply because they do not have the trust on the e-retailer. In online shopping, a key of an important evaluative criterion is security (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). Information collected from the customers should be kept confidentially and protected to avoid leaking out to any third party unnecessarily. A research stated that it is inspiring if the e-retailer provides a secure, reassuring and trusty web page that build trust effectively (Ribbink, Riel & Streukens, 2004). On that matter, e-retailer should establish trust with the online shopper by providing good quality of goods or services in order to increase customer satisfaction as well as building customer loyalty for a long term relationship. By having a transparent security policy, strong data encryption system

and reliable multi payment system, online shopper has the trust of the security (Lu, Chang & Yu, 2013). It is also known that privacy associated in protection individual`s data, details of credit card number and mode of web browsing in website (Chiou, Wu & Sung, 2009). Hence, e-retailer should be concerned about the privacy issues in which the customers` information must be well protected to ensure the feeling of secure, trust and reliable feeling in them.

2.2 Individual behavior (Convenience & Expectation)

Companies should understand the behavior of people in order to target its specific customers through customer segmentation and enhance its capabilities in customer service (Rashad, Waqas, Wan & Hossein, 2011). E-retailer should understand more about the purchasing behavior of online shopper to maximize profits, market shares and to remain sustainable in this competitive environment. With such, expectations of the online shoppers and the conveniences of shopping online are strongly influential to the online shopper` purchasing behavior.

2.2.1 Expectation

Mostly consumers have their expectations in terms of the product, service, vendor and the quality of the website before engaging themselves in online shopping action and that influences their intentions, attitudes in purchasing behavior (Li & Zhang, 2002). In such matter, there is a study stated that fashion, preferences, style, purchasing behavior and the view the social group can influence the consumer to be committed to use e-retailing or not (Liao & Shi, 2009). On top of that, a research also mentioned that the higher the positive experiences gained by the consumer, the higher the chances of expectations in future purchases (Ha, Janda & Muthaly, 2010). The mission of Amazon.com has always "to be Earth`s most customer-centric company" , to provide positive experiences by having many products available on sale, conveniently with a reasonable price (Amazon.com, 2014). Customer-centric marketing can be defined as to fulfill the wants and needs of every individual as such improvised in marketing productivity, technology and diversity of the markets (Sheth, Sisodia & Sharma, 2009). Hence, it is an advantage for e-retailer or any organization to create a positive shopping experience in hoping that the consumer will come back for more.

2.2.2 Convenience

E-shopping allows convenience that enable to increase the efficiency of searching information through removing the travel expenses and psychological costs in being frustrated (Dennis, Merriless, Jayawardhena & Wright, 2009). With the introduction of multichannel retailing, e-retailer is formed as there is a huge opportunity for them to expand the business faster and reach out more audience geographically. Businesses are using the internet to enhance customer services and product information to boost profits through decreasing errors, orders process efficiency and spread out the opportunities of the online market (Kumar & Petersen, 2006). There is a possibility

that online shopper might do shopping online due to its hectic lifestyle that they do not have enough time to go out just for shopping. With the aid of Internet to shop online, the online shoppers can get to browse, do shopping and perform transaction immediately with just a click of a mouse. Tesco strives to give a positive shopping experience through online shopping by delivering to the door step based on the consumer`s time preferences with low price yet fresh variety of products to be chosen (Tesco.com, 2012). Tesco online services enable the customers to seek any products through Internet in which helps to save in terms of time searching and effort as they do not have to drive to the store to do grocery, queue up to pay, drive back to home and unloaded the groceries from the car (Ma, Ding, & Hong 2010). Thus, e-retailer should be aware on how to provide the best for the consumer by understanding that all consumers are not the same. E-retailer can do customer segmentation based on their culture, geographical and social life respectively as well utilizing Internet to create the conveniences of shopping online.

2.3 Social influence

Word of mouth (WOM) in e-retailer world has a great impact in both positive and negative view on acquiring new customers (Chung & Chin, 2009). It plays a huge role to influence customers and could affect the perception of their decision in purchasing behavior both in online or offline shopping, in which mainly WOM comes from family members, friends and people around us. E-referrals are form of online referrals in WOM to acquire new customers by using ideas like "inform-a-friend' on the online website in hoping that the reviews gained will be positive (Ahrens, Coyle & Strahilevitz, 2013). There is a research stated that involvement in relationship is linked with the emotional of individual and that influences the commitment of shopping in the purchasing behavior (Sanchez & Iniesta, 2009). It is more convincing for consumers to receive messages from their close ones such as family and friends rather from the e-retailers (Tran, Strutton & Taylor, 2012). For example, if a close friend of Lee had a bad experience shopping online on that certain e-retailer site, HoneyQ.com, probably Lee will not visit or purchase any things from that same e-retailer site that his friend mentioned it earlier even Lee has never shop there before. It is more objective and trustworthy compared with any other resources in word of mouth (WOM) as the customers treasure the views from the fellow customers (Casalo, Flavian & Guinaliu, 2008). Thus, e-retailer should not neglect the power of word of mouth (WOM) because there is a significant effect that influences the consumer to shop online or not.

3. MEASUREMENT OF PROCEDURE IN E-RETAILER

Usually, it is predictable that sellers will maximize their business profits by establishing and keeping a good image (Wu, Huang & Du, 2011). E-retailer should be concerned

of the consumer`s perception by taking measurements to have a good quality website, providing the ease of accessing to save time, energy and effort, and as well as customize to each customers accordingly based on their shopping pattern and their preferences.

3.1 Quality of Website

Good quality of website is able to guide consumers to complete online transactions smoothly and entice them to revisit the e-retail`s site (Li & Zhang, 2002). The design of the website should be easy to surf, find and navigate to speed up the buying process. An image of a business is seen as the precious asset of an organization in contributing money wise and in terms of investment for a long period of time (Eastlick & Lotz, 2011). It is mentioned that e-retailers should make the effort to increase customers` website in terms of interaction element (Ha, Muthaly, & Akamavi, 2010). Besides, it is known that attitudes of the online consumers can be formed through the web site characteristics in which emphasized as an important element (Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche, 2012). Currently, many websites enable the online shopper to find information easily by showing the comparison of products, customer`s product reviews and the rank of the store which increases the knowledge of potential customers before purchasing it immediately (Wu, Huang & Du, 2011). Each online site should constantly updating the latest information regarding of its product or services and make sure the website page is not identical with other competitors at all. The service attitudes such as the site context play a huge influence on purchasing intention in additional of providing rich information (Mazaheri, Richard & Laroche, 2012). On this matter, e-retailers should think of ways to inform customers about the product information in detail and increase interactivity from especially in terms of the time consumed in downloading the information (Lim & Dubinsky, 2004). The e-retailer`s website characteristics play a role in online retailing as some consumers will do comparison with other competitors before purchasing products (Chung & Chin, 2009). On top of that, the authors mentioned that in order to create a positive effect to the consumer`s shopping behavior, e-retailer should provide a designated site to portray as a physical environment of the store. E-retailer should take note to increase the level of drawing customer`s attention towards its site, besides making sure that the site is easy to use or surf in online environment (Ribbink, Riel & Streukens, 2004).

3.2 Ease of use

Browsing the website of an e-retailer`s webpage enables online shopper to increase their shopping frequency on the same site with the touch of enjoyment, experiences and entertainment elements in hoping to give a lasting impression. Interactive website is known as e-interactivity basis which builds connection between the e-retailer and its valuable customers in the virtual world. The most common characteristic that occurs on the website is the information of company or e-retailer` site, shopping cart,

customer service line and privacy matters (Liu, Tucker, Koh & Kappelman, 2003). By providing attractive user interface which is easy to use, this helps to increase the satisfaction and that relates to the e-consumer loyalty (Ribbink, Riel & Streukens, 2004). Plus, there is a research stating that the higher the chances of easily accessing the website, the greater the level of speed and helpfulness when surfing online (Sabiote, Frias & Castaneda, 2012).Shopping online enable customers to find their desired product easily with complete information allow the order to be performed efficiently and delivered on time (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). E-retailer should allow the consumers to perform transaction easily and access to any information virtually through Internet (Liao & Shi, 2009). On top of that, e-retailer should make sure the experiences of shopping online are positive by trying to reduce any problem and hassle while performing online transaction. A firm`s accuracy in delivery of product which is known as delivery fulfillment is measured to reflect the efficiency of the services (Janda, Trocchia, & Gwinner, 2002). Thus, with the efficiency in transportation and logistics areas as such the delivery of products or services on time consistent with every purchase, loyalty and trust of online shoppers will be instilled as they are satisfy with the e-retailer`s services.

3.3 Customization

Customization of individual`s preferences and identify their shopping behavior can help to deliver the best customer services in online shopping. By providing customization features, online shoppers get to see what they want on the website easily and faster (Feinberg, Kadam, Hokama & Kim, 2002). E-retailer can send personalized message to each customer after they agreed to give email address voluntarily to e-retailer for subscriptions purposes, received latest updates and promotion as a way to create value proposition. It is known that perceived value has a significant value of loyalty in online business, thus reframing an individual to find for alternative e-business services (Chang, Wang & Yang, 2009). Furthermore, e-retailer`s site should keep track on each online shopper`s buying purchasing behavior by having cookies on the site and then target each customers on what they are looking for by giving some suggestions to them in order to deliver excellent customer services. A research mentioned that the success of e-retailer can be seen through tailoring the data given to deliver the consumers` need effectively (Park & Kim, 2003). The features of customization enable user to distinguish what the content they wanted to see in which meet their taste and choices on each site visits (Feinberg & Kadam, 2002).

3.4 Excellent customer services

It is stated that customer satisfaction is linked with positive direct experiences (Ha, Janda & Muthaly, 2010). The satisfaction in the quality of service offered is generally associated with customer loyalty (Ribbink, Riel & Streukens, 2004). Besides, there is a research

mentioned that satisfaction plays a role in e-commerce and is linked with customer loyalty (Chung & Chin, 2009). As the customer is satisfy with the process of shopping online on that particular e-retailer`s site, there is a greater chance that this customer will come back to shop and perhaps manage to build customer loyalty in that case. A satisfied customer with the services in the past will be likely to pay for a premium price on the same service provider and continue to shop in the future (Ueltschy, Laroche, Eggert, & Bindl, 2007). This shows that there is an interrelated linked and collaboration between the level of satisfaction and customer loyalty in online shopping environment. Email address, toll free number, and frequently asked question segment should be included in e-retailer site to maximize the opportunities of providing excellent customer services online. Customer service representatives should be equipped with well training programs to deal with any concern and complaint on the matters of goods or services provided (Ha, Janda & Muthaly, 2010).

4. DISCUSSION

As there is a rapid growth in e- retailing market, e- retailer should strive to maximize the profits by adding its own sustainable advantages tailoring to the business prospect. It was stated that by delivery and having right online experience in mixture of online functionality, message, emotions, stimulus of products or services influence the decision making process on the virtual customers to the online marketers (Constantinides, 2004).The author suggested that e-retailer should have a unique e- retail concept which allows it to be differentiated by reconsidering its design of the website to be more attractive enough, providing the convenience and ease to use for online shopper as well as offering customization element to distinguish itself from its competitors. It is found out that a research stated that as the e-retailer image increases, there is likely less in terms of perceived risk of shopping online as such performance in shopping online and has a higher favorable to experience shopping online (Wu, Huang & Du, 2011). Besides on building customer satisfaction, it is also very crucial to have an ongoing relationship with the customers which can contribute to the development of the e-business, for the benefit in long term. As such, if the customer is happy with the services offered from that particular e-retailer site, the customer will definitely share with their family members and friends (WOM), and likely will come back to shop for more based on the positive experiences in the past. In addition, there are some researches stated that there is a strong validation and interrelation between customer satisfaction with customer loyalty in the retailing market as these two elements strongly influences the customers in terms of the purchasing behavior. E-retailers that manage to create customer loyalty will not easily leave to other competitors because, of the trust towards its products, services and the organization as well as have their customers the sense of being appreciated based on the customization method, in which all in all build a satisfied customer on the services offered.

5. CONCLUSION

This research provides an overview of using the three main factors that involved in online shoppers towards the e-retailer besides, extending the perspective of security and privacy elements when sharing the personal information online, individual behavior in terms of expectation and convenience as well as social influences that influences the perception of shopping online. Furthermore, e-retailers should take note of having the three main elements in the measurement of procedure in online business which consists of quality, ease of use and customization, as all are indirectly linked with customer satisfaction. Upon being successful in e-retailing market, customer satisfaction should be greatly emphasized because it is also linked with customer loyalty in which will secure the existing customers from leaving and as well attract new customers to shop online. Hence, e-retailers should continue to build a positive perception in shopping online effectively by delivering the best services for each and every customers and consumers as there is a huge opportunities waiting to be explored.

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