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Exploring Online Customer Experience Formation: How do Customers Explain Negative Emotions during Online Shopping Encounters?

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Abstract We investigated online customer experience formation by using customers' own explanations of their negative emotions during their online shopping encounters. Survey data from 1,786 Finnish online shoppers were used to identify customers who experienced strong negative emotions during online shopping encounters ($N = 215$) and the causes of their negative emotions were then analyzed in depth from their written descriptions. Our findings indicated that customers attributed most of their negative emotions to online store characteristics, including user interface, product and service range, pricing, and trustworthiness; however, some negative emotions were also attributable to factors outside of the online store's control, including individual consumption habits and financial constraints, ecological issues, and family concerns. Our findings demonstrate the multidimensionality of customer experience and highlight the importance of better understanding the different factors that can influence the customer experience.

Keywords: • Online Customer Experience • E-Commerce • Online Shopping • Online Shopping Encounter • Emotions • Attribution Theory • Qualitative Study •

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1   Introduction

Given the rise of e-commerce and customer expectations thereof, understanding the online customer experience has become critical to online businesses' survival. Previous research has indicated that providing a superb online experience positively influences customers' online buying behaviors (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008), while negative experiences can cause substantial damage to a company's reputation and customer relationships (Svari et al., 2011). Given this, the causes and consequences of customers' online experiences have been well identified in various marketing and information systems studies, and several models and measurements have been developed to understand the influence of specific corporate actions and characteristics, as well as how they affect customer experience as an outcome (e.g., Cho & Park, 2001; Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000; Rose et al., 2012), including optimal flow experiences (e.g., Skadberg & Kimmel, 2004). Many studies have also investigated the interactions between online service providers and customers (e.g., McLean & Osei-Frimpong, 2017), and studied customer experience as a process.

However, despite significant attention from practitioners and academics alike, discussions of online customer experiences have been dominated by a focus on how firms can orchestrate the experience for customers, and key elements of customer experience have often been studied using only predefined firm-led attributes. Online customer experience research is therefore still rather limited and fragmented (Kawaf & Tagg, 2017; McLean & Wilson, 2016). As Rose et al. (2012) noted, while identifying the components of online service quality can provide a starting point for the exploration of online customer experiences, such experiences are the result of much more than customers' reactions to service stimuli. Formation of customer experience can include many other important factors in addition to those that are visible to the company. Studies that focus exclusively on firm-led service settings ignore how a customer's online experiences may be influenced by factors beyond the firm's control (Trischler, Zehrer & Westman, 2018) and what the customer perceives as most heavily impacting their online experience (Kawaf & Tagg, 2017). Marketing researchers have therefore recently called for a greater focus on consumer perspectives (e.g., Heinonen & Strandvik, 2018; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019), and researchers are increasingly recognizing the need to understand the holistic nature of customer experiences (Ordenes et al., 2014) in both online and offline contexts.

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The present study explores customer experience from the customer perspective and highlights the customer's primary role as an experience constructor, in contrast to the dominant provider-led approach. Survey data collected from online shoppers at 18 Finnish online stores is used to identify customers who experienced strong negative emotions during their online shopping encounters. We then use a qualitative approach to analyse customers' written comments describing their emotions during online shopping encounter, using attribution theory (Heider, 1958) to explain how individuals make sense of events and assign causes to them. We suggest that when customers construct their customer experience (which is in this study understood as an outcome of customer's online shopping encounter), negative emotions and cognitive explanations given to emotions during the encounter are responsible for customers' negative experiences. As previous research has indicated that negative experiences influence customer loyalty (Roos, Friman & Edvardsson, 2009), word-of-mouth (Svari et al., 2011), complaints, (Bougie, Pieters & Zeelenberg, 2003), repurchase intentions (Grewal, Levy & Kumar, 2009), and attitudes toward the service provider (Davidow, 2003), it is therefore important to understand what causes negative experiences and how customers make sense of their online shopping encounter.

This study is organized into five sections. The next section discusses the theoretical background of this study, including online customer experience and attribution theory. Section 3 presents the methodological choices for the empirical study, and Section 4 presents our empirical findings. Section 5 discusses the contributions and managerial implications of this study.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Online customer experience

Online shopping behavior has been widely studied in the marketing and information systems literature of the past decade. Online shopping experience (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018), online customer experience (McLean & Wilson, 2016), online customer service experience (Klaus, 2013), and user experience (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006) have all been variously used to refer to the same essential concept. However, while scholars agree on the importance of the online customer experience, no consensus exists on its precise definition or

constituents. Nonetheless, the psychological constructs of cognition and affect have been consistently identified as influential components (e.g., Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007): it has been suggested that customers engage in both cognitive and affective processing during their consumption encounters, and that, in so doing, they construct new meanings, which are then stored in their memories (Rose et al., 2012). Previous studies have also investigated how emotions contribute to customer intentions, such as online shopping intentions (Koo & Ju, 2010), post-purchase intentions (Kuo & Wu, 2012), repurchase intentions (Gountas & Gountas, 2007), and impulse buying (Vonkeman, Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2017). It appears that online shopping triggers various emotions simultaneously and that the presence of one emotion neither excludes nor guarantees the presence of another (Pappas et al., 2014; Pappas, 2018).

When operating in online environments, customers encounter numerous stimuli capable of influencing the cognitive and affective dimensions of their experiences (Hoffman & Novak, 2009; McLean & Wilson, 2016). A significant amount of research has therefore examined the features of high-quality e-commerce platforms and how different online store attributes directly affect online customer experiences within the business-to-consumer context (e.g., Cho & Park, 2001; Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000). However, such online customer experience studies have largely focused on corporate elements, and other potential elements influencing the customer experience have been less studied. Furthermore, very few studies have explored the mechanisms through which customers process and interpret their online service encounters. As Tuunanen and Govindji (2016) noted, traditional approaches in information systems development have focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational processes. However, systems designed to target consumers should place greater emphasis on customer perspectives, and it is critical that online firms should understand the socio-psychological aspects of service usage. Gaining such insights will require the use of new approaches and theoretical lenses—such as attribution theory.

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2.2 Attribution theory

Heider's (1958) attribution theory explores how people explain the events and behaviors that they encounter in daily life. Attributions—the inferences that individuals make about the causes of events and behaviors—are made to understand and explain individual experiences and to plan future actions accordingly. Attribution theory proposes that attributions can be classified as either internal or external. In an internal or "dispositional" attribution, individuals assign causality to something within individual's control, such as effort or personal factors (e.g., abilities, traits, or emotions). In an external attribution, causality is attributed to situational or environmental factors that are outside individual's control. For instance, when an individual believes that something happened due to her own ignorance, she is making an internal attribution; however, if she blames the circumstances then she is making an external attribution. The attribution process includes two basic errors: fundamental attribution error and self‑ serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975). Fundamental attribution error refers to the fact that individuals tend to make internal attributions when focusing on external behaviors; that is, people tend to emphasize an agent's internal characteristics rather than external factors when explaining someone else's activities. Self‑ serving bias, on the other hand, occurs when individuals attribute positive events, such as a personal success, to one's internal factors, while attributing negative events, such as a personal failure, to external factors.

Consumer attributions affect customer satisfaction with a service and their post-purchase behaviors (Iglesias, 2009), among other aspects of consumer behavior, with important implications for companies. Laufer (2002) suggested that when failures or unexpected outcomes occur, customers can experience psychological discomfort, which in turn makes them search for the causes of failure in order to avoid repeating them; likewise, consumers seek to understand the causes of positive experiences in order to be able to repeat similar experiences (Martinko, Harvey & Dasborough, 2011). As Jackson (2019) noted, attributions associated with a positive outcome and a high expectation of future success lead to a greater willingness to approach similar tasks in the future than activities associated with negative outcomes. In marketing, most attribution studies have investigated customers' reactions to service or product failure (Iglesias, 2009; Weiner, 2000). For instance, Tam, Sharma and Kim (2014) found that customers attributed a

negative service delivery outcome more strongly to a service employee or firm, while they attributed positive service delivery outcomes more strongly to themselves. Attribution theory has also been used to investigate customer experiences in the context of tourism. Jackson, White and Schmierer (1993) suggested that tourists attributed positive tourism outcomes to internal factors and blamed negative tourism experiences on external factors. External and internal attributions have also been identified in studies of negative emotions; for instance, Westbrook (1987) and Oliver (1993) both argued that individuals' emotions are related to external factors, such as situations or circumstances, as well as to internal factors.

3   Methodology

Study data were collected via an online survey conducted in cooperation with 18 Finnish online stores between September and December 2018. The stores included different types of business-to-consumer (B2C) shops that sold clothing, cosmetics, music, electronics, groceries, and home, decoration, and recreation products and accessories. Customers at these online stores were shown a link to the survey on a tab that appeared after they had successfully placed an order. In the survey, respondents were first briefly asked about their demographics and online shopping habits. Respondents were then asked about the emotions they had experienced during their online shopping encounter. Emotions were measured using a set of 28 specific emotions; the related questions and measurement scales can be found in Laros and Steenkamp (2005). Negative emotions included anger (angry, annoyed, irritated), frustration (frustrated, discontented, disappointed), fear (afraid, nervous, worried), sadness (depressed, sad, guilty), and shame (embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated); positive emotions included contentment (contented, confident), peacefulness (calm, peaceful), optimism (optimistic, encouraged, hopeful), joy (happy, pleased, joyful), and excitement (excited, thrilled, attracted). Respondents were asked to rate all these emotions on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicated that they had not experienced that specific emotion at all while 7 indicated that they had experienced that specific emotion very strongly during the online shopping encounter. In a subsequent open-ended section of the survey, respondents were asked to describe in their own words the emotions they had experienced and to explain the causes of their strongest positive and negative emotions. Respondents were also given an opportunity to comment on the topic or the survey itself.

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In total, 1,803 respondents completed the online survey. However, 17 respondents had to be dropped from the study due to invalid or missing data, resulting in a sample size of 1,786 respondents. From these, we identified respondents who experienced strong negative emotions during their online shopping encounter; an emotion that differed by more than two standard deviations from the average value of that emotion was considered a strong emotion. The number of respondents with at least one such strong negative emotions was 387. We then excluded all respondents who did not also comment on their negative emotions related to the online shopping encounter or whose comments were unclear; the final number of included respondents was 215. These respondents were customers of 17 different online stores; however, most of them (142) had shopped at a specific store selling groceries, from which the majority of all survey responses were also collected. Most respondents were female (87.9%), under 40 years old (59.5%), shopped online at least monthly (77.2%), and had previously shopped in the store that was specifically inquired about in the survey (64.7%). Respondents' descriptive statistics are reported in Appendix 1.

We then analyzed the data provided by the 215 respondents in the open-ended section of the survey. Comment length ranged from 2 words to 429 words. Using NVivo software, the comments were first coded as either internally or externally attributed based on their overall content and most frequent attribution. Comments that included two or more distinct points were split into separate comments for analysis. Each comment was coded multiple times before tallying the final counts and categorizations of the negative emotions expressed by the respondents. It is also important to note that although the main themes were identified based on the attribution counts, this study was based on an interpretive approach, and understanding, rather than quantifying, was the principal objective.

4　　Results

We identified 349 attributions from the data. Customers had various external and internal explanations for their perceived negative emotions during online shopping encounters, which could be divided roughly into three main groups: online store (239 attributions; external), sociomaterial environment (28

attributions; external), and the self (82 attributions; internal). These themes are analyzed below.

4.1 Results

As expected, customers attributed their negative emotions mainly to online store characteristics. User interface was an important cause of negative emotions (109 attributions), as were store offerings (114 attributions, including both product and service range [74 attributions] and pricing [40 attributions]). Trustworthiness (16 attributions) was also mentioned relatively frequently. These attributions and sample quotes are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: External attributions: online store

Attribute	Count	Sample quotes (translated)
User interface	109	
Checkout difficulties	30	"Irritated when ordering as the online store claimed my home address does not exist." (Female, 34)
Product search difficulties—product arrangement and filter options	20	"I had to put a lot of effort into finding suitable products for myself. It caused frustration." (Female, 70)
Order management problems—shopping cart functionality	17	"Negative emotions are caused by the fact that the number of items cannot be changed without removing the product completely. This has almost ended my purchase process on two occasions." (Female, 37)
Lack of information	14	"The information was quite incomplete in the product descriptions. It caused a little bit of frustration and forced me to go to other pages to find information." (Female, 30)

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Unintuitive navigation interface	12	"An awkward encounter. The shop was a bit confusing, and I didn't even know what to click at first." (Female, 19)
Purchase process duration	11	"It took a lot of time to order, which irritated me." (Female, 36)
Other	5	—
Product and service range	74	
Desired product was not available	32	"All the products that I wanted to order were not available. That was frustrating." (Female, 37)
Limited product range	17	"Negative feelings about the relatively narrow range and products that are unsuitable for me." (Male, 54)
Items became unavailable during the purchase process	10	"I was sad as the lovely thing I just noticed was out of stock when I tried to put it in my shopping cart." (Female, 45)
Product quality	6	"I just read a negative review about the headphones, but I ended up buying them anyway because 'there's no better'; I feel anxiety, excitement, disappointment, worry, frustration." (Female, 35)
Lack of delivery destinations	5	"I got frustrated because I couldn't get delivery where I wanted. I was close to cancelling the entire order." (Female, 30)
Other	4	—
Pricing	40	
Expensive product prices	12	"The affordability and versatility of the products did not meet my expectations, which to some extent caused disappointment. Probably my expectations were unrealistic." (Male, 37)
Quantity discounts	12	"When I tried to reach the limit for free shipping, I got frustrated." (Male, 28)
Unclear or misleading pricing	6	"Negative emotions were raised because I checked the real prices of products. I felt

		disappointed because the 'real' prices at the shop were marked much higher than they actually are." (Female, 52)
Expensive shipping costs	6	"Frustrated because I had to pay for delivery." (Female, 61)
Other	4	—
Trustworthiness	16	
Company reliability	9	"Many web pages are maintained by fraudsters, so there is always some fear when dealing with a new online shop." (Female, 19)
Delivery reliability and convenience	7	"I am a little uneasy about whether the products I purchased actually are in stock and if I have to contact the shop because of product exchange issues." (Female, 27)
Total	239	

User interface includes an online store's visual design, interaction design, and information infrastructure. Consistent with previous literature (e.g., Nielsen, 1999), our findings indicated that this was an important cause of negative emotions and highlighted its importance. In particular, negative emotions were often attributed to the checkout and finalization processes. Customers described confusion and a variety of problems regarding discounts, payments, and authentication; the causes were mostly due to technical issues and errors but also included some concerns regarding unclear instructions and terms of service. In addition, product search difficulties and order management were significant causes of negative emotions. Lack of information (e.g., product reviews, stock status, and descriptions and images) and unintuitive overall navigation of an interface made customers feel that the purchase process was complicated. Purchase process duration also caused negative emotions, as shopping was often perceived as taking time away from other tasks or as not saving time compared to shopping in brick-and-mortar stores.

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Negative emotions related to product and service range were linked to customers' unmet expectations when a desired product was not sold or was out of stock, or when the product range was considered too limited in general. A few customers also attributed their negative emotions to doubts about product quality; groceries were a particular source of concern since they are perishable. A lack of options, including delivery options, caused feelings of disappointment. Customers also cared a lot about e-commerce pricing and had price expectations in mind before beginning to shop. They experienced disappointment when products or services were more expensive than they expected or could afford. Quantity discounts triggered negative emotions because customers felt that they added extra pressure while shopping; chasing a discount limit was considered stressful and obliged the customer to buy something that they would not necessarily have bought otherwise. Misleading pricing, such as falsifying normal prices, made customers feel defrauded. In general, a store's trustworthiness was considered important, and many respondents expressed doubts about e-commerce companies. Thus, not being able to draw conclusions about a company or its delivery reliability based on the information provided led to negative emotions.

In summary, customers had high expectations for their online shopping encounters, and they easily construed their experience as negative if the customer journey did not proceed quickly or as expected due to constraints imposed by the product selection, service offerings, or the overall store environment. Customers wanted to find what they were after quickly and to access relevant information in a logical, convenient manner (Nielsen, 1999).

4.2   External attributions: Sociomaterial environment

Even though customers mostly attributed their negative emotions to external factors related to the online store, external attributions were also assigned to the wider sociomaterial environment—the context in which the experience takes place and in which both the company and the customer operate. Within this, ecological issues (13 attributions) were particularly important, followed by family concerns (8 attributions) and purchase context (5 attributions). These attributions are reported in Table 2 with sample quotes.

Table 2: External attributions: sociomaterial environment

Attribute	Count	Sample quotes (translated)
Ecological issues	13	"Negative emotions are mainly due to all the unnecessary stuff that is produced, sold, and thrown away on this overloaded planet." (Female, 29)
Family concerns	8	"Negative emotions were caused by the sluggishness of the internet connection/computer, as well as the coughing and questioning spouse next to me." (Female, 34)
Purchase context	5	"I feel ashamed that I 'have to' buy waste food because of my financial situation." (Female, 21)
Other	2	—
Total	28	

Previous research has found that environmental consciousness and concerns have profound effects on consumer behaviors (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen & Diamantopoulos, 1996; Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). Furthermore, consumers are increasingly willing to embrace "green", environmentally preferable purchasing (Joshi, 2016). Consistent with these studies, our findings indicated that environmental issues also influenced customer experiences as concerns about ecological issues caused negative emotions during customers' online shopping encounters. Respondents cited climate change, "throw-away culture," waste, overconsumption, reckless and selfish attitudes, and the excessive production of single-use items as sources of anxiety during their shopping encounters.

A number of respondents also attributed their negative emotions to their personal social environment. Family members were blamed for either causing disruptions or failing to participate sufficiently in the purchasing process. Other external context factors also caused negative emotions; for example, purchasing necessary items, such as groceries, was noted to be an automatically negative event for some respondents. In addition, not belonging to the main target group of a shop, for instance a man shopping in a "woman's" store, and buying

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"leftover" products which were perceived as being not good enough for other consumers, were perceived as embarrassing.

In sum, these findings show that customers' experiences were affected by emotions beyond those directly triggered by the online company. The formation of customer experience in an online context can be influenced by individuals' physical and social environments, including other people's actions (Ruiz-Mafe, Tronch & Sanz-Blas, 2016), trends and social norms, including the customs, traditions, and beliefs of a particular group of people at a given time (Ivanova-Gongne, 2015).

4.3   Internal attributions: The self

Although attribution theory posits that negative issues are often attributed to external factors (Miller & Ross, 1975), our findings indicated that negative issues were also attributed in part to internal factors regarding oneself, and matters which oneself can impact. In particular, three main themes emerged: one's consumption habits (30 attributions), one's financial constraints (18 attributions), and one's uncertainty regarding a purchase (16 attributions). These themes, along with other less prominent ones, are presented with sample quotes in Table 3.

Table 3: Internal attributions

Attribute	Count	Sample quotes (translated)
One's consumption habits	30	
Unnecessary purchases	15	"Negative emotions were caused by the fact that I bought futile, not-so-necessary stuff." (Female, 25)
Lack of self-discipline	11	"I feel guilty and frustrated when I have to consume and give in to my consumption needs." (Female, 41)
Self-indulgence, self-rewarding	4	"I felt slightly guilty when I thought about buying expensive luxury and wellbeing products!" (Female, 27)

One's financial constraints	18	"Negative emotions were mainly caused by my own monetary situation." (Female, 33)
One's uncertainty regarding a purchase	16	"Guilt and the negative feelings were raised by the total amount of the order and the consideration of whether I made good purchases and purchased materials that I will for sure use. I wouldn't want to throw anything in the trash." (Female, 40)
One's skill at online shopping	6	"My shopping was affected by not having used the site before. So, I didn't know how to use it." (Female, 25)
One's carelessness or mistakes while shopping	5	"I was annoyed when I obviously clicked negligently and lost a product momentarily." (Female, 51)
One's bad mood	4	"This was so-called comfort shopping. I was feeling really sad and thought I'd distract myself when I decided to go shopping for cosmetics that I had been planning to buy for some time." (Female, 26)
Other	3	—
Total	82	

Internal attributions were mostly linked to one's personal consumption habits and inner conflicts related to guilt triggered by shopping. Negative emotions were attributed to purchasing unnecessary items, making impulse purchases, surrendering to shopping desires, and self-indulgence, and mostly reflected customers' disappointment with themselves due to their perceived loss of self-control. Many respondents reported feeling embarrassed by their consumer behaviors and self-indulgence; for example, buying a luxury item for personal consumption instead of investing in a necessary item for a family member caused individuals to feel like a "bad person". This guilt was partly explained by one's financial constraints and uncertainty regarding a purchase. However, while many respondents indicated that spending money in general caused them anxiety in spite of any justifications and the general necessity of shopping, some

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respondents indicated that their negative emotions were more dependent on a specific context: spending money caused negative emotions only if there was something more important that should have been purchased instead. Negative emotions were thus most strongly connected to impulse purchases and purchases of less critical items.

In addition to personal consumption habits, insufficient skill as an online shopper triggered negative emotions. Some customers indicated not having enough experience with online shopping or with a particular store, and thus being afraid of making mistakes or of being unable to complete a purchase. Some respondents also blamed themselves for making mistakes during their online shopping encounter and thus experienced negative emotions. In addition, preexisting "bad moods" were reported as affecting customers' overall experiences; such moods could provide the initial inspiration to shop but could also cause individuals to not enjoy the shopping encounter.

In summary, our findings showed that internal attributes and personal considerations could affect customers' experiences. However, the findings indicated that internal factors such as self-perceptions, past experiences, skills, and the perceived meanings of purchases are inevitably influenced by socially constructed mechanisms, including the ideals and norms by which people understand and experience themselves as subjects (Shankar, Cherrier & Canniford, 2006). Feeling guilty about shopping—a perception of doing something wrong—is an example of this. While previous research has demonstrated that customers experienced feelings of guilt during their decision-making processes related to consumption (e.g., Burnett & Lunsford, 1994), our findings indicated that guilt, among other socially influenced, self-related constructs, can also formatively influence customer experiences.

5   Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this study was to increase the field's understanding of how online customer experiences are formed. We therefore studied how customers explained their negative emotions during online shopping encounters. This customer-oriented approach contributes to the current provider-led understanding of online customer experiences and adds to the small number of

previous studies that focused on online experience as constructed by customers (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018; Kawaf & Tagg, 2017; Klaus, 2013).

First, unlike many online customer experience studies (e.g., Cho & Park, 2001; Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000; Rose et al., 2012), we did not focus on the influence of the online store environment on customer experience or measure the components of customer experience. Instead, we applied a holistic, qualitative perspective in which online experiences were described by the customers themselves, in their own words. We were thus able to better understand customers' logic (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2018) and how customers made sense of their online store visits. We concluded that multiple external and internal factors beyond an online provider's control can contribute customer experiences. Nonetheless, our results are consistent with prior studies on online customer experience that highlight the role of service providers (Cho & Park, 2001; Constantinides, 2004; Koo & Ju, 2010), since, as expected, most of our respondents' negative emotions were caused by online store features (e.g., user interface, product and service range, pricing, trustworthiness). These findings are also consistent with attribution theory's concept of self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975), which suggests that individuals tend to blame external factors for negatively perceived issues and events. Our findings also support attribution theory's hypothesis that individuals make sense of events and issues with both external and internal attributions (Heider, 1958).

Overall, our findings indicate that, while the role of user interface on customer experience is widely acknowledged in the existing literature, online customer experiences are not constructed in a vacuum, and that other contexts, operators, and issues are also important; consumers engage in many activities other than those that are visible to companies (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2018). From a customer's point of view, external factors outside of a corporate website, such as sociomaterial environment (including social norms, the behaviors of others, trends), can cause negative emotions during shopping encounters. Furthermore, our results highlight the important role of internal, self-related factors on customer experience. During their shopping encounters, customers engaged in self-reflection on their behavior and evaluated their personal performance and persona in the context of their purchasing behaviors. Overall, our findings suggest that customers want to feel in control of their consumption behaviors

and the shopping encounter, and that all external and internal factors that threaten their sense of control contribute negatively to their experiences.

Second, our findings indicate that customers could experience strong negative emotions even if their online shopping encounter concluded in a purchase, thus making it a successful encounter from the service provider's perspective. The findings implicate the complexity of customer experience and that a positive outcome (purchase) from a provider perspective cannot be equated with an overall positive customer experience. This has important implications for companies since previous research has shown that negative experiences can influence customer loyalty (Roos, Friman & Edvardsson, 2009), repurchase intentions (Grewal, Levy & Kumar, 2009), and attitudes toward the service provider (Davidow, 2003). Our findings thus highlight the importance of understanding the whole customer journey during online shopping encounters, including both positive and negative contributing factors. Although our findings indicate that the causes of customers' negative emotions during shopping encounters can never be fully controlled by a service provider, providers can nonetheless consider contributing factors when designing and implementing online services. By studying and better understanding customers' concerns and the processes from which customers derive meaning, service providers can modify their services to improve the factors that contribute to customers' negative meaning-giving. Further research with a variety of additional research methods is required to fully understand both the external and internal contributors to customer experience in both online and offline contexts. Such findings could be utilized in service design with the goal of creating more customer-friendly and customer-oriented services..

Appendix A: The descriptive statistics of the respondents (N = 215)

	N	%
Gender		
Male	26	12,1 %
Female	189	87,9 %
Age		
19–29 years	69	32,1 %
30–39 years	59	27,4 %
40–49 years	42	19,5 %
50–59 years	29	13,5 %
60–69 years	10	4,7 %
Over 70 years	6	2,8 %
On average, how often do you shop online?		
Daily	1	0,5 %
Weekly	54	25,1 %
Monthly	111	51,6 %
Yearly	44	20,5 %
Less than yearly	5	2,3 %
How many times have you shopped in this online store?		
Never	76	35,3 %
1–3 times	83	38,6 %
4–10 times	41	19,1 %
Over 10 times	15	7,0 %

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