

New Normal of Online Learning: Applying Customer Satisfaction of Learning Experiences to obtain Competitive Advantages on the Online Market

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Abstract: With the rising number of COVID-19 infections, colleges and universities have been forced to move class to an online format. Online teaching and learning becomes mainstream as the new normal. Customers purchase online courses to meet their expectations in terms of satisfaction of the experience. The practice of experiential marketing increases brand recognition by providing a memorable experience. The objective of the research is to study the concept of customer experience and satisfaction. Moreover, this research takes the Chinese University MOOC platform as an example to examine the outcome of online learning experience and customers' satisfaction. The data for the research are gathered through WeChat and mail questionnaires which are distributed to target participants. The survey was conducted in China with the sample size at 303. The result revealed that the customers are very satisfied with the sensory, affective, think, act, and relate experience of the Chinese MOOC platform. However, improvement on sensory experience of online course video playing and affective experience of recommended courses should be done in order to increase the level of customer satisfaction. It is recommended that online education platform should determine their courses and services with the high quality that attracts the customers.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive uncertainty around the world. Many countries have implemented country-wide closures of their schools, universities and other educational institutions. With the rising number of infections, colleges and universities have been forced to move class to an online format. As of June 2020, 1.725 billion students from 195 countries were affected by school closures. UNESCO recommended the use of online learning applications and platforms that schools can use to reach students remotely. Online teaching and learning becomes mainstream as the new normal.

Indeed, online education as an alternative teaching mode has been expanding sharply in recent years. According to the data conducted by iiMedia Consulting China, during the COVID-19 epidemic, 63.1% of the Chinese customers purchased knowledge-paying products, while more than 90% of the courses experiencers said they were satisfied and willing to repurchase (iiMedia Research, 2019). 88.8% of the consumers are Generation Y and Z, mainly distributed in China's first-tier and second-tier cities.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) became popular internationally in recent years. It has engaged the top universities all over the world to share academic resources with students. The high quality online courses have made a breakthrough in China. China national MOOCs established in 2013 with the launch of XuetangX. The first MOOC platform of China was developed by Tsinghua University. Ministry of Education of China announced an initiative to recognize the nation's best MOOCs in 2017. Each course from MOOCs platform is evaluated by a team of Education Ministry of

China. The goal is for China to have 3,000 nationally-recognized MOOCs by the end of 2020. The Chinese University MOOC is a part of “China’s National Excellent Courses ” program. It is an online education platform jointly launched by NetEase and the Higher Education Society. The Chinese University MOOC has played a significant role in online education gaining found respect. The paid courses from the Chinese University MOOC platform are focused on the two parts: supplementary courses for entrance examination and famous professor column.

Amount of students at all levels are beginning to consider purchase online courses as an option for their needs. With the remarkable growth of information technology, customer online experiences has emerged as a key concept in marketing management. Bhattacharya, Srivastava, & Verma (2019)¹ stated that online customer experience has becoming a strategic differentiator for sustainable competitive edge. Experience marketing practitioners and researchers believe that customers should be actively involved in the production and developing a relationship with the brand, because the practice of experiential marketing increases brand recognition by providing a memorable experience. The more interactive the experience, the more memorable. Pine & Gilmore (1998)² created the term “experience economy” and stated that organizations must create memorable events for the target customers, and that memory itself becomes the product: the "experience". The research take the Chinese University MOOC platform as the example, in order to increase customer satisfaction with the experience of MOOC courses and maintains the long-term affiliation.

2. Literature Review

Customer experience was originally proposed by Holbrook & Hirschman (1982)³. The concept stated that customer perception of value and price is responsible for only a fraction of customer behavior. Schmitt (1999)⁴ presented a revolutionary approach for brands. The approach stated that managers can get customers to sense, feel, think, act and relate to the company and brands. Then Schmitt & Brakus (2007)⁵ proposed other five dimensions of customer experiences, namely, “sensory”, “affective”, “social”, “bodily” and “intellectual”, and revealed that different brands can be differentiated on these experience factors. Muthiah & Suresh (2017)⁶ taken Schmitt’s five factors for scale development in the context of retail setting, the result found that the relationship among these experiential factors in retail atmosphere. Amin & Tarun (2019)⁷ conducted a study on experiential marketing and customer satisfaction in the context of restaurant industry. The study found that sense experience, feel experience, and think experience have positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

As the concept is more important today than ever, thus, customer experience have attracted more and more schoolers’ attention. Khalifa & Liu (2017)⁸ applied the contingency theory that accounts for the roles of online shopping habit and experience. The result revealed that online shopping habit and online shopping experience have positive mediated effects through satisfaction and moderate the relationship between satisfactions and online repurchase intention. Ow, Spaid, Wood, & Ba (2018)⁹ found that online auction bidders gain more experience, their level of institutional-based trust increases and leads to higher bid levels. Vakulenko, Shams, Hellstrom, & Hjort (2018)¹⁰ showed that the last mile delivery experience mediates the relationship between the customer’s perception of the online shopping experience and customer satisfaction. Nowacki & Kruczek (2020)¹¹ conducted a research on experience marketing at museums and visitor attractions. The study indicated that relationships among co-creation, experiences and satisfaction of museum visitors depend on the context of the heritage attractions and the result also showed that the appearance of experiences is influenced by participation in their creation.

3. Methodology

In order to identify satisfaction of the customer online experiential from the Chinese University

MOOC platform, data were collected through a questionnaire sent to the target users via email and We-chat. The questionnaire was pretested to ensure it was easily understood. We sent 350 questionnaires to the samples and suggested that the participants could pass the questionnaire on to other friends who were moviegoers. As a result of this process, we collected 303 valid questionnaires. The five experiential dimensions proposed by Schmitt (1999), namely, sensory experience, affective experience, think experience, act experience, and relate experience were taken for scale development in the context of online learning of the Chinese University MOOC platform.

4. Result

The demographic profile of the sample showed that, the 53.8% of the subjects were female. Approximately 78% of the respondents were students, while 22.11% of the respondents were employed. Most (63.37%) were undergraduate student, while around 21.12% were graduate student. 56.76% of the respondents were from first and second line cities.

4.1 Customer satisfaction of the sensory experience

The customer satisfaction of the sensory experience was analyzed through five aspects (1) the sensory experience of navigation classification on the homepage of the platform; (2) the sensory experience of online course video playing; (3) the sensory experience of online course audio playing; (4) the sensory experience of subtitle accuracy in online video courses; and (5) the sensory experience of the length of the courses, as shown in the following figure:

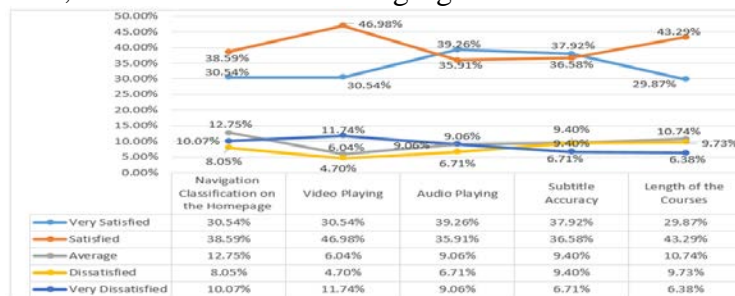


Figure 1. Proportion of satisfaction of sensory experience

According to the figure 1, approximately 40% (39.26%) of the respondents were very satisfied with the sensory experience of online course audio playing, 37.92% of the respondents were very satisfied with the sensory experience of subtitle accuracy in online video courses. However, more than 10% (11.74%) of the respondents showed that they were very dissatisfied with the sensory experience of online course video playing.

4.2 Customer satisfaction of the affective experience

The customer satisfaction of the affective experience was analyzed through five aspects: (1) affective experience of recommended courses; (2) affective experience of study plans; (3) affective experience of charge standard; (4) affective experience of course difficulty; and (5) sense of accomplishment, as shown in the following figure:

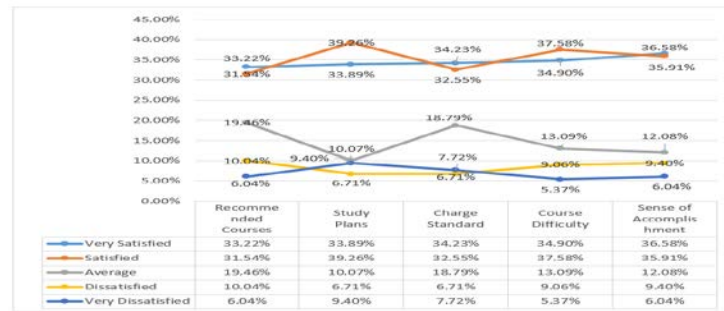


Figure 2. Proportion of satisfaction of affective experience

The figure 2 showed that 36.58% of the respondents were very satisfied with affective experience of accomplishment and 34.90% of the respondents very satisfied with affective experience of course difficulty. However, approximately 20% (19.46%) of the respondents showed that affective experience of recommended courses was at the average level and 10.04% of them were dissatisfied with the affective experience of recommended courses.

4.3 Customer satisfaction of the think experience

The customer satisfaction of the think experience was analyzed through four aspects: (1) the think experience of course introduction; (2) the think experience of course content; (3) the think experience of courses questions; (4) the think experience of the feedback in the answering area, as shown in the following figure:

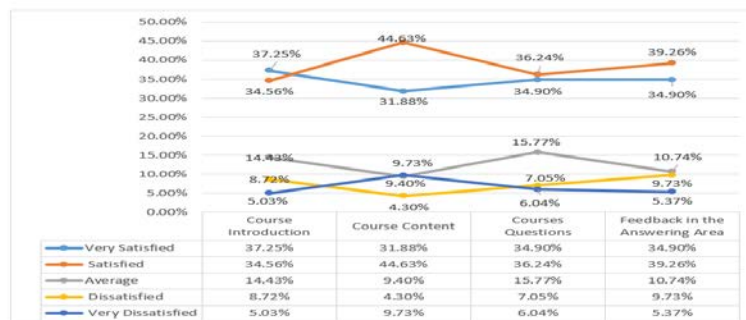


Figure 3. Proportion of satisfaction of think experience

The figure 3 showed that 37.25% of the respondents were very satisfied with the think experience of course introduction, 34.9% of them were very satisfied with the think experience of courses questions and the feedback in the answering area.

4.4 Customer satisfaction of the act experience

The customer satisfaction of the act experience was analyzed through three aspects: (1) partnering with prestigious universities; national golden curriculum; and the column of famous professor, as shown in the following figure:

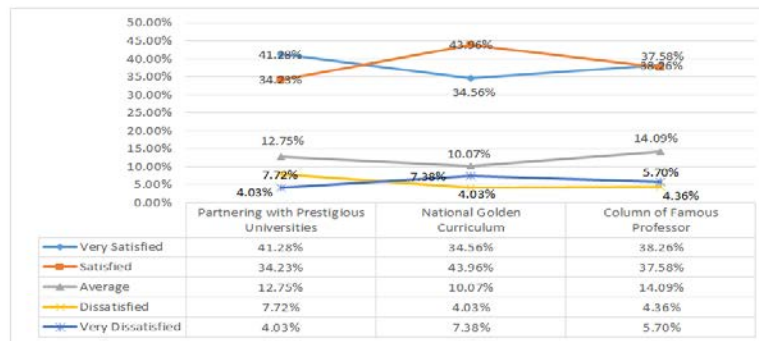


Figure 4. Proportion of satisfaction of act experience

The figure 4 showed that customer satisfaction of the act experience of three aspects were very high. 41.28% of the respondents were very satisfied with the act experience of partnering with prestigious universities and 38.26% of them were very satisfied with the act experience of the column of famous professor.

4.5 Customer satisfaction of the relate experience

The customer satisfaction of the relate experience was analyzed through five aspects: (1) university cloud experience; (2) learning partner experience; (3) effective and efficient communication with the professor; (4) professional knowledge enrichment; (5) academic frontier view experience, as shown in the following figure:

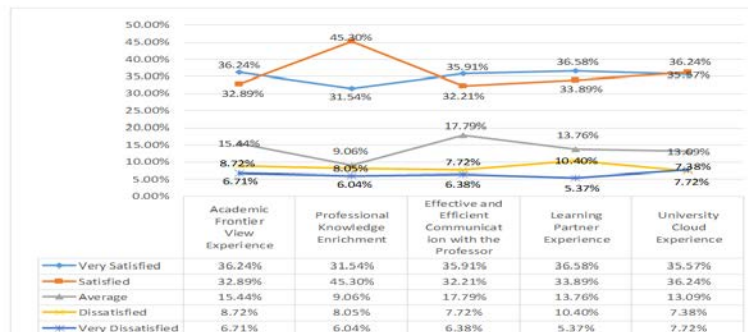


Figure 5. Proportion of satisfaction of relate experience

The figure 5 showed that 36.58% of the respondents were very satisfied with the learning partner experience and 36.24% of them were very satisfied with the academic frontier view experience. However, approximately 20% (17.79%) of the respondents showed effective and efficient communication with the professor was at the average level.

5. Conclusion and Managerial Implication

With the rapidly growth of internet technology, customer satisfaction of online experiences has emerged as a key concept in marketing management (Lu, Suhartanto, Gunawan, & Chen, 2020¹²; Lucini, Tonetto, Foliatto, & Anzanello, 2020¹³). The Chinese University MOOC provides the public with over 1,000 courses from over 900 Chinese prestigious universities (MOOCLab, 2020). It has played a significant role in online education gaining found respect. The research take the Chinese University MOOC platform as the example, in order to increase customer satisfaction with the experience of MOOC courses and maintains the long-term affiliation. The results revealed that the customers of the Chinese University MOOC had high satisfaction with each sensory, affective, think,

act, and relate experience. However, more than 10% of the respondents showed that they were very dissatisfied with the sensory experience of online course video playing, approximately 20% of the respondents showed that affective experience of recommended courses was at the average level.

Customers purchase online courses to meet their expectations in terms of satisfaction of the experience. The customer loyalty will come along with the customer's satisfaction. Therefore, online education platform should determine their courses with the high quality that attracts the target customers.

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