

A STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION DIMENSIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY TO ONLINE SHOPPING SITES—AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ONLINE SHOPPING SITES IN ARABIC MARKET

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Abstract: *This study deals with customer satisfaction dimensions and their impact on customer loyalty to online shopping sites from behavioral perspective. The study aimed at identify the extent of online shopping sites' owning of satisfaction dimensions in Arabic market, and the role of those dimensions which were determined by the researcher as (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation, trust) to improve and develop customer satisfaction to reach the loyalty level. An analytical study of the most famous online shopping sites in Arabic market (souq-eureka-X cite) was made, where customer is considered with high importance. To achieve the study goal; the researcher designed a questionnaire of (35) items to collect data; a random sample of (120) customers using online shopping sites (Souq-Eureka-X cite) was chosen. (120) Questionnaires were distributed to the sample; of which (100) were returned. The data were validated for appropriate statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS software. The most important results were as follows: Online shopping sites (Souq-Eureka-X cite) possession of customer satisfaction dimensions was high. The most effective dimension of all satisfaction dimensions was trust. The positive role of satisfaction dimensions will move customers to loyalty level. There are no significant differences between online sites customers' attitudes toward the role of satisfaction dimensions in reaching loyalty.*

Keywords: *Service Quality, Brand Reputation, Trust, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty.*

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that information technology and internet revolution became more mature and faster in the last decades; which made necessary that online shopping is the substitute for goods purchase. The diversity of goods, services, efficiency and security, in addition to the fast development of online shopping popularity, made the

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necessary to improve the online shopping industry to meet the customers' changing needs and expectations daily. Traditionally, customers have to visit stores to buy what they need; however, what characterize online shopping from traditional shopping is that customers' interests do not accompany them to stores; customers make choices according to what they see in online shopping site. As many organizations believe that retaining customer costs less than attracting (acquiring) new one, it is useful to explore the factors, which can affect customer loyalty to follow a purchase behaviour of an online shopping site.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Retaining customers has become more profitable for online shopping stores regardless their size or products quality. With the emergence of many e-shops (either small individuals, or medium-sized and large firms) competition has become more difficult, besides the fact of gaining customers became more challenging; apart from the increased cost of attracting new customers. So that, the loyalty of customers is considered to be the future of e-commerce, and is the guarantee to achieve profitability and sustainability, besides it is more effective than concentrating on gaining new customers everyday.

Accordingly, research problem is designed by the following inquiries:

- How far do the online shopping sites (Souq, Eureka, X-cite) have the customer's satisfaction dimensions which were determined in the research, namely (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation and trust)?
- Does service quality influence perceive value of customer's satisfaction? Consequently, customer's loyalty?
- Is there any direct connection between satisfaction and loyalty in the e-shopping sites?

RESEARCH PURPOSE

Our research objectives are:

1. To deal with the customer's satisfaction dimensions as an entrance to ascend with satisfaction into loyalty.
2. To clarify the crucial effect of customer's satisfaction about e-shopping site and its role in transferring from satisfaction into loyalty
3. To focus on customers researches and transferring from satisfaction research into loyalty research, since loyalty becomes the dominant indicator of business performance.

This research aims to determine the contributed factors that provoke customers to shop online through e-sites, and widely shades light on the connection between customer satisfaction when shopping via e-site and his loyalty to the shopping site.

RESEARCH VARIABLES

Service Quality

Service is different from physical products since it is intangible, changeable, produced and consumed at the same time, and non-storable. The best definition for “service” is mentioned by (Grönroos, 2000, p.46) where it is defined as a process consisted by a chain series (small or large) which usually, not necessary, found as a result of the interaction between the customer and the employees, or between the customer and the physical resources/ the systems that provide solutions for customers’ problems. Moreover, the service was defined as a judgment of the consumers about the entire superiority and general privilege of the firm (Parasuraman *et al.* 1998). However, the service quality of an e-site is the realization of the customer of the e-site capability to respond and fulfill his purchasing needs (Lin and Sun, 2009).

Trust

(Ostrom and Lacobucci, 1999) defined the trust as the will or the intention in relying on a partner who has the courage to exchange, while (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997) found that trust leads to devotion and dedication since it lessens the cost of negotiation, moreover, it eases the fear of customers towards the opportunistic behavior of some suppliers and service providers. (Corritore *et al.*'s, 2003, p.740) defines it as the expected attitude in case of purchasing risk; that the customer will not be exploited.

Brand Reputation

(Herbig and Milewicz, 1993) have defined the reputation as the stability on the attribute of the organization’s entity over time. Based on that, the organization might gain number of reputations (price reputation, product reputation, innovativeness reputation), while (Shapiro, 1982) considers that reputation could be more positive when it develops sales and market’s share, and establishes more loyalty. (Bobin and Zinkhan, 1990) sees it as the mental image which is created and hidden in the customers’ minds and which appears in their emotional and rational response.

Perceived Value

The customers’ judgement on the consumption value after comparing the received benefits from products and services with its cost (Zeithmal, 1988) which was confirmed by Day (1994), “Perceived Customer Value = Perceived benefits – Perceived cost”. The essential concept of the definition is that the benefits versus the sacrifice. The service firms provide a high value of their services through enhancing the offered services to go beyond customers’ satisfaction (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996)

Customer Satisfaction

(Selnes, 1993) found that the relation between the satisfaction and the intention of repeated purchase; depends on customers' ability in evaluation the products or services; while others see that satisfaction cannot be generalized to become loyalty as in insurance industry (Srivastava and Rai, 2013), neither in hotel industry (Wilkins *et al.*, 2010), nor in restaurants industry (Bowden-Everson *et al.*, 2013)

Customer Loyalty

Loyalty was defined from behavioral perspective (Wilkins *et al.*, 2010) as the intention to repeat purchasing the same products in next purchasing occasion without starting further searching activities. According to (Oliver, 1997), customer loyalty is "a firm's deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-support a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational effects and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Satisfaction and loyalty of customer are two important constructs that have effect on the administrative concepts since 1990's. Loyal customers would provide services which could contribute in the improvement and growth of companies, therefore companies should concentrate on customer's loyalty and utilizing this loyalty as a main strategy for future (Vilares and Coelho, 2003). Whereas, (Srivastava and Rai, 2013) had a study covered the life insurance industry in India, it finds out that the satisfaction of customer has a significant impact on customer's loyalty; consecutively the service quality has outstanding connection with customer's satisfaction; that in turn relates with customer's loyalty.

The study concludes to the fact that customers' evaluation of the superiority of the life insurance services leads them to satisfaction. Moreover, the continuous and repeated satisfaction of customers will establish a solid base of customers which support the concept of life insurance. Hence, the satisfaction of customer enhances the relation between service quality and customer loyalty, and then it lies in between service quality and satisfaction. According to (Binninger, 2007)'s study which enclosed retail grocery stores in France the increase in satisfaction towards a brand of a store influences the customers' loyalty of the store. Furthermore, it showed that this influence is greater to known brand than unknown brand in the store. The conclusion was "there is connection between satisfaction on the brand of the store and the loyalty to the store; and it emphasized the positive relation between the satisfaction on the brand and the loyalty to the store with the loyalty of the customer". However, (Ramanathan and Ramanathan, 2010) came to different results about loyalty, according to their study which targeted hotel sector and covered about %42 of the UK and Ireland hotels "the utilized value

against the sacrificed money" is the critical attribute of the loyalty for the hotel guests, this what was expressed by the business guests and guests of independent hotels where the customers' services besides the room and food quality were satisfactory points. While those guests who are spending leisure time or using specific hotel chain they revealed "value against money" is unsatisfactory factor. "Value against money" is a crucial indicator that has a positive impact on intention of guests to stay once again. Nevertheless, the failure of this attribute cannot be compensated by improving services and other attributes. So that the insufficient performance of the three attributes (customer service, room quality and food quality) might have negative and obvious impact on the guests' intention to stay once again.

(Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2006), his study showed the total customer experience TCE as an entrance to loyalty that can be seen in three main interactive elements: material moments, emotional moments, and value chain moments. Comparatively speaking, researchers suggest classifying loyalty as a function against each element of the TCE; which means that the loyalties were classified as follows: tangible loyalty, emotional loyalty, and loyalty related to value. Since loyalty is one function out of the customer's expert; the loyalty ladder of customers can be created as: random purchase of brand, re-purchase of the brand, referring to purchase the brand, repeated purchase of the brand, regular purchase of the brand, total purchase of the brand and total family lifetime purchasing and commitment.

(Horppu *et al.*, 2008)'s study which included 867 consumers of e-magazines through a website, it confirmed the results of the former studies concerning the customers' experiences on a brand affecting the trust, satisfaction and loyalty in a different way are depending on the relation between customers and brand. As well as it refers to the fact that satisfaction and trust regarding the level of an e-site determined the loyalty of customer about the e-site on the web. Trust and satisfaction of the e-site have a positive impact on customer loyalty of the e-site. That what was indicated in the study of (Bowden-Everson *et al.*, 2013), which follows the Structural Equation Modelling SEM. It enclosed restaurants in Australia; it stated that trust and satisfaction have a great effect on loyalty, that satisfaction bring forth the recommendation to (visit the restaurant), repeated purchase (repeated visit to the restaurant), and the relation duration (as long as I am staying in this area I will go to that restaurant). The study added that satisfaction has strong and positive impact on the emotional commitment, calculative commitment, trust and delight; so that the relation between satisfaction and those aspects is stronger than the direct relation between satisfaction and loyalty. This result enhances the idea that satisfaction is an essential initiator in turning into loyalty, (Oliva *et al.*, 1999).

As a result, the main conclusion from this study is satisfaction, in and on itself, might not be enough to form a permanent and sustainable loyalty in restaurant industry. Hence, the analysis shows the commitment, trust and delight have an important effect on developing the customer's loyalty as much as the importance

played by satisfaction to create loyalty. The study provides a sight into the relation between commitment, involvement and trust. An important positive connection was found between the calculative commitment, emotional commitment, involvement and trust, yet it is insignificant. This result is compatible with prior researches which state that involvement leads to trust; consequently, the psychological willingness of the client or customer in making a purchase decision becomes a crucial matter in transferring from satisfaction into loyalty within the restaurant industry sector.

When the impact of product/service quality on the brand reputation, satisfaction and loyalty is concerned, (Selnes, 1993) reached a conclusion that brand has a great and concrete impact on loyalty, in all presented studies. While the effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty is conditioned by the context, which means that satisfaction have direct effect on loyalty; just when it's possible for customers to evaluate the quality of performance (of product or service) through their experience and practice. Likewise, by experiment the study found out that there is a strong connection between perceived quality and satisfaction, and in turn with loyalty. The strong connection between brand and loyalty might lead to exaggeration in evaluation if not controlled by expertise quality and satisfaction.

The effect of quality on satisfaction would obviously decrease when controlling the brand. As well as, the effect between satisfaction and loyalty will decrease when controlling the effect of brand reputation on satisfaction. The study of (Lin and Sun, 2009) supported the idea of (Selnes, 1993) that quality of product/service has an influence on satisfaction and loyalty. (Lin and Sun, 2009) carried a study to verify the experience of users of *e*-shopping sites in Taiwan, and concluded that customers' satisfaction will positively and directly affect on their loyalty to the *e*-shopping sites. Besides, accepting the technological factors will directly and positively affect satisfaction and loyalty of customers towards the *e*-shopping sites.

Moreover, the quality of online shopping sites services might directly and positively affect the satisfaction and loyalty of customers about the *e*-shopping sites. Last but not least, the cost of specific holdup duration might positively and directly affect customer's loyalty to the online shopping site; yet it will not positively affect its satisfaction. While (Abu-El Samen *et al.*, 2011) examined the relation between customers' service skills and customers' loyalty through the mediate impact of customers' satisfaction in mobile services sector in Jordan. He concluded that there are three components of customers' services skills (building reputation skills, non-verbal communications skills and customers service culture), which have positive impact on customers' satisfaction dimensions (total satisfaction, functional satisfaction and technical satisfaction). As a result, the total and technical satisfaction dimensions regarding customers' service lie in between the total connection of customers' service skills and customers' loyalty.

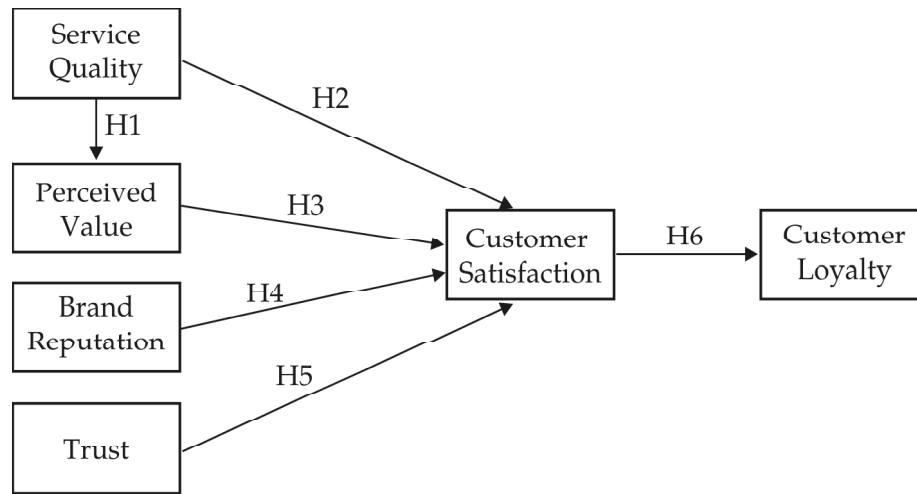


Figure 1

Summary of Literature Review

Literature review supported the idea that the quality of product/service performance had an impact on satisfaction and loyalty. The former studies concluded to verify the experiences of e-shopping sites users and came out to:

1. Customers find the perceived value of service quality is an essential element of satisfaction.
2. The relation between service quality, brand attitude, trust and customer's satisfaction are presenting new perspectives of loyalty concept.
3. The strong connection between brand trust and behavioral loyalty reveals within the e-shopping industry more than in other industries.

Research Model and Hypotheses Development

The researcher noticed that all models of former studies had presented the satisfaction as an independent variable affecting loyalty (dependent variable); some other studies had presented the two variables in the same concept. However, no study presented the satisfaction as a mediator variable lies between loyalty as a dependent variable, and service quality, perceived value, brand reputation, and trust as independent variables. Following is a model of what researcher would examine:

Derived from the figure above, this study defined service quality as the main pilot of perceived value. Researcher inquired about the relations between (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation, trust) and satisfaction. Hence, hypotheses were developed as:

1. When service quality of online shopping site increases, perceived value is enhanced.

2. When service quality of online shopping site is raised, customer's satisfaction increases.
3. When perceived quality of online shopping site is raised, customer's satisfaction increases.
4. When brand reputation of online shopping site is raised, customer's satisfaction increases.
5. When trust of online shopping site is raised, customer's satisfaction increases.
6. When the customer's satisfaction is raised, customer's loyalty increases.
7. There is no essential difference among online shopping sites users' attitudes concerning the role of satisfaction dimensions in achieving loyalty.

Research Boundaries

- **Objective boundaries:** Satisfaction was studied through four dimensions which were determined as (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation, trust)
- **Spatial boundaries:** A sample of e-shopping sites customers in Arabic market.
- **Time boundaries:** The questionnaire was held between 2014-2015

METHODOLOGY/SAMPLE/DATA COLLECTION

Derived from the study inquiries and hypotheses above, this research used descriptive approach, which study phenomenon qualitatively and quantitatively; and analytical approach to analyse data.

The most well-known online shopping sites users in Arabic market were our research society. The researcher designed a questionnaire of (35) items to collect data; a random sample of (60) customers using online shopping sites (souq-eureka-X cite) was chosen. (60) Questionnaires were distributed by e-mails and social media; of which (50) were returned.

Measures

A five-point Likert scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5) was anchored in the measures of the focal constructs, all of which were adapted from former studies after a careful search focusing on the pertinent literature. Service quality was measured by "offered services and how far they meet customers' needs" in five items from (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) developed by (Grönroos, 2000) and adapted by (Peeng and Wang, 2006). Perceived value was measured by "the relation between price and service" in four items from (Zeithaml, 1988) developed by (Peng and Wang, 2006). Brand reputation of online shopping site was measured by "purchasing dates of the site and competitive sites" in three items from (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996) developed by (Grönroos, 2000) and (Aydin and Özer, 2005).

Trust was measured in five items from (Tian *et al.*, 1994), (Morgan and Hunt, 1998) and adapted by (Chu, 2009)

Satisfaction was measured by “evaluating the satisfaction indicator of competition, total service and first-line employees of the site” in four items from (Fornell, 1992) adapted by (Oliver, 1997) and (Mouri, 2005)

Finally, customer loyalty was measured by “the willingness of repurchase a preferred product or reuse a service consistently in the future, and recommend products and services to other people” in six items from (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) adapted by (Wulf *et al.*, 2001), (Aydin and Özer, 2005)

Table 1
Constructs’ measurement

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Referred To</i>
Service Quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This online shopping site follow up in a timely manner to customer requests. 2. The frontline employees of this online shopping site are always willing to help me. 3. This online shopping site is consistent in providing good quality service. 4. This online shopping site offers personalized services to meet customers’ need. 5. This online shopping site provides timely information when there are new services. 	Peng and Wang (2006); Grönroos (2000) Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> (1988)
Perceived Value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The promotional offers from this online shopping site were worth the money. 2. It was easy to get benefits from the promotional offers. 3. The proposed rewards from this online shopping site were what I wanted. 4. It is highly likely that I will achieve the proposed reward. 	Cheng <i>et al.</i> (2008) Peng and Wang (2006);
Brand Reputation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I consider that this online shopping site’s reputation is high. 2. I have a good feeling about the online shopping site’s social responsibility. 3. The online shopping site delivered a good brand image to its customers. 	Aydin and Özer (2005); Grönroos (2000); Ravald and Grönroos (1996)
Trust	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This online shopping site is reliable because it is mainly concerned with the customers’ interests. 2. The billing system of this online shopping site is trustworthy. 3. The reputation of this online shopping site is trustworthy. 4. The policies and practices of this online shopping site are trustworthy. 5. The service process provided by this online shopping site is secure. 	Chu (2009); Aydin and Özer, (2005); Tian <i>et al.</i> (1998); Morgan and Hunt (1994);

Cont. table 1

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Referred To</i>
Customer Satisfaction	1. I am satisfied with the overall service quality offered by this online shopping site. 2. I am satisfied with the professional competence of this online shopping site. 3. I am satisfied with the performance of the frontline employees of this online shopping site. 4. I am comfortable about the dealing with this <i>e</i> -site.	Mouri (2005); Oliver (1997); Fornel (1992);
Customer Loyalty	1. I intend to continue using services from this online shopping site for a long time. 2. If I want to change a new shopping service, I am willing to continue selecting this online shopping site. 3. Even if another online shopping site's price is lower, I will go on using this online shopping site 4. I am willing to say positive things about this online shopping site to other people. 5. I will encourage friends and relatives to use the services offered by this online shopping site. 6. To me, this online shopping site clearly is able to provide the best service.	Aydin and Özer (2005); Wulf <i>et al.</i> (2001); Morgan and Hunt (1994)

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The reliability test was performed using Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability (CR) test. As shown in Table 1, all constructs show a value above the threshold (.60) for both Cronbach's alpha and CR adopted by Bagozzi and Yi, 1988)

Table 2
Cronbach's Alpha and CR for correlation of constructs' items

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Service Quality</i>	<i>Brand Reputation</i>	<i>Perceived Value</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Loyalty</i>
Cronbach's Alpha α	.69	.73	.86	.79	.80	.87
Composite Reliability CR	.87	.88	.92	.88	.88	.92
Number of Items	5	3	4	5	4	6

The results reveal that all constructs in this study fulfill discriminant validity.

DATA ANALYSING

After checking the reliability of the items, it needs to take the averaged scores of items for each construct of the four constructs as the final score upon which we conduct further analysis. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations for all the four constructs. The sample standard deviations of trust (1.55808) and Customer Loyalty (1.44818) are relatively higher, while the others range from 1.21 to 1.39 (mean 1.33). Many of the constructs are negatively skew; the non-normality could be a sign of inter-correlation. In addition, almost all of the variables are positively correlated to satisfaction; except for perceived value shows weak correlation to satisfaction.

Table 3
Summary of descriptive statistics of constructs

Constructs	Service Quality	Brand Reputation	Perceived Value	Trust	Satisfaction	Loyalty
Mean	6.957	6.708	7.5148	7.1156	7.0792	6.769
Std deviation	1.21624	1.25352	1.39186	1.55808	1.20982	1.44818
Skewness	.114	.132	-.743	-.727	.270	-.576

Note: * Standard errors of skewness 0.240

The data were validated for appropriate statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS software. The proposed model and the significance of the hypotheses were tested by using the partial least squares (PLS) method. The proposed model explained 44.6% of the variance in service quality, 54.2% of the variance in perceived value, 18.1% of the variance in brand affect, 40.5% of the variance in trust, and 7.4% of the variance in satisfaction. Positive relationships were found for utilitarian value between service quality and perceived value (H1: $\beta = .60$, $p < .01$) β and between service quality and customer satisfaction (H2: $\beta = .106$, $p < .01$) β . A positive relationship was found between perceived value and customer satisfaction (H3: $\beta = .40$, $p < .01$) β . Also, brand reputation affects customer satisfaction (H4: $\beta = .86$, $p < .01$) β and a positive relationship was found between trust and customer satisfaction (H5: $\beta = .108$, $p < .01$) β . Finally, a positive relationship was found between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (H6: $\beta = .112$, $p < .01$) β . As for the attitudes of online shopping sites customers (H7: $\beta = -.70$, $p < .01$) β Which means that there is no essential differences for the four constructs (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation, trust)

CONCLUSION

The study concludes the following:

- The *e*-shopping sites (Souq-eureka-x cite) had high level of satisfaction dimensions (service quality, perceived value, brand reputation and trust).
- The most effective dimension of satisfaction was trust in *e*-shopping site, and the least effective dimension was perceived value. Since trust and satisfaction are two faces of same coin (I trust the site means I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied means I'm loyal)
- The members of the examined sample notice the positive role of each dimension of the satisfaction dimensions in increasing their satisfaction was firstly achieved by service quality, next the improvement of brand, then the increment in trust and finally the developing of satisfaction to convert it into loyalty.
- The study did not show any essential difference among *e*-shopping sites users concerning the role of satisfaction dimensions in achieving loyalty.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

It was hard to be accurate in selecting the most appropriate sample to be examined in this research, despite of that we expect continuation of researches to expand the sample range for related future researches to be more representative. The discussed factors in this study are still being improved and it is expected more factors to be added the coming studies like culture, specifications of products, decisions of customers themselves to do shopping via the internet, in addition to other social factors that could affect the e-satisfaction and loyalty of customer; which would enrich the content of the research. Therefore, we do believe that there is more need to reveal the impact of products specifications on the e-shopping customers.

Suggestions

For customers

- Make shopping from well-reputed e-sites, or consult friends and relatives who had previous experience in dealing with those sites.
- Use always secure sites, which adopt data coding system for credit cards.
- Surf different sites, which contain the target product and compare price and specifications.
- Read accurately purchase conditions, especially delivery and returning conditions, and privacy policy of the site.
- Before sending the information to the site, make sure of the accuracy of these info, quantities and price of the purchased items.
- Keep a copy of purchase order each time you purchase via internet, as it is vital when you need to change the purchased product.

For e-shopping sites

- Cost of delivery and freight should be included in the price so that customer will not recognize a difference in price for the physical shop.
- Reduce automatic windows (pop-ups and banners) as it does not help customers to concentrate.
- Increase offers and discounts and not to be limited in feasts and New Year.
- Make offers for the most desired and sold products, which contributes in customers' satisfaction.
- Make seasonal competitions like (world cup, Olympiad, champions' league...) for new products to select winners.

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