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Customer Engagement: An Experiential System View

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This conceptual research analyses the interrelationship of cognition and affect in the development of customer engagement in the backdrop of the cognitive-experiential self-theory.

Design/methodology/approach - The existing literature on the interpretation of customer engagement and cognitive experiential self-theory is used to develop the new theoretical framework of customer engagement

Findings -The multidimensional view of the interaction between the intra-psychic subsystems of cognition, affect, inner dispositions and behaviour is the one generally followed by investigators in the analysis of customer engagement. In the dynamics of customer engagement, it has been recognized that cognition and affect individually and interactively contribute to the state of customer engagement as these are considered to be the core processes of engagement.

Research limitations - Being a conceptual paper, primary empirical support is lacking to explain the cognitive-experiential system view of customer engagement Practical implications - The mechanisms of customer engagement in the application of marketing strategy and the understanding of the consumption patterns of the consumer provide new insights to the marketing activities and the consumer

Originality/value -The suggested framework of customer engagement provides yet another way of interpreting the same from the perspective of intra-individual sub-systems.

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Introduction

One of the major factors of success in business is the proportion of customers who are engaged like buying different degrees product/service, being a loyal customer, recommending the product to others and being an advocate of the product (Roberts & Alpert, 2010). This underlines the importance of customer engagement in research and practice as it presents key challenges to the managers in creating a group of engaged customers for sustainable performance as well as to the researchers in explicating the mechanisms of customer engagement (Bowden, 2009). The concept of customer engagement (CE)as an emerging concept in marketing literature, however, undergoes modifications of definitions and importance (Cheung et al., 2011; Bowden, 2009). Those drawing upon the psychological inputs, more specifically organisational and consumer psychologists define "it as a sort of ongoing emotional, cognitive and behavioural activation state in individuals...while advertising academics and professionals see it as the 'turning on of a prospect to a brand idea by the surrounding context" enhanced (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). CE is also explained in relation to the relationships the customers build and maintain with the organization (Kritzinger & Petzer, 2020).

As there is no single agreed upon view as to the structure and the way customer engagement is researched and applied in consumer behaviour, this paper is an attempt to add up to the existing knowledge of customer engagement by delineating the two key constructs of cognition and affect (Cheung et al., 2011) and this is accomplished mainly by drawing on the cognitive experiential self-theory of (Epstein, 2003) and related consumer behaviour constructs.

Conceptual Background

In one of the psychological models of CE (Cheung et al., 2011) the three key dimensions are absorption, vigour and dedication wherein absorption is equated with the cognition "being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed", vigour is same as behavioural and dedication refers to "sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge". In another conceptualization (Schaufeli et al., 2002). CE is defined as a "persistent and pervasive affectivecognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event. individual behaviour" that acts to enhance organizational productivity. Godinho et al. (2019) attest to the significance of emotional as well as cognitive experiences and processes in the dynamics of CE.

In the psychological state/process explanation (Bowden, 2009; Cheung et al., 2011; Schaufeli et al., 2002) CE is characterised by different and interacting levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity (Hollebeek, 2011). The specific patterns of cognitive, emotional and behavioural states determine the level of customer engagement. For Schaufeli et al. (2002) CE is of a positive, fulfilling, flowing state of optimal experience. In the process perspective of (Bowden, 2009) CE leading to loyalty the formation comprises calculative of commitment cognitive activity, the involvement of trust and the affective commitment of emotions shaping up CE. In the behavioural interpretation of (Doorn et al., 2010). CE is commensurate with customer activities that even go beyond purchase with a focus on a brand or a firm, where customer behaviours are tilted toward a brand or firm. Here the customers are engrossed with a firm or a brand.

It is to be emphasized that within these differing perspectives, in accordance with (Brodie et al., 2011) there are uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional conceptualizations of CE wherein it is implied that in the former CE is either emotional or cognitive or behavioural and latter CEismultidimensional the constitutive of cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes or states. In the multidimensional conceptualizations of (Patterson et al., 2006) and (Hollebeek, 2011) CE is an interactive state/process of cognition, emotion and behaviour. The implication here is researcher whether the follows multidimensional unidimensional orconceptualization, the three states or processes and behaviour cognition, emotion independently and/or interactively influence CE.

In the light of these conceptualizations this paper attempts to focus on the cognitive and the affective states/process of the customer as "there is a need to investigate... the cognitive and (the) affective components of the process of customer engagement..." (Bowden, 2009). This is because the state of the mind of the engaged customer is both a process and an outcome of the interaction between the intra-individual processes (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The interaction between cognition and emotion has received considerable research interest in the analysis of overt and covert behaviour (Mackie & Worth, 1989). What is important in this consideration is that either the cognition or the motion does not structure the CE but it is in the interplay between cognition and emotion that consumer behaviour more specifically CE can be understood (Chea & Luo, 2008). Behaviour is better understood in

the mutual interaction of cognition and affect because "without cognitive activity to guide us we could not grasp the significance of what is happening in our adaptational encounters with the environment... Emotion without thought would be mere activation without the directionally distinctive impulses..." (Lazarus, 1991). Cognitive process as an interpretative activity produces emotions of significance that either facilitate or inhibit CE behaviours and in the same way consumer emotions mediate consumer decision-making, product evaluations and attitudes to advertisements. In other words CE as an experiential state (Schaufeli et al., 2002) is contingent on the interaction and the combination of cognition and emotion that finally structure the CE at the overt and the covert levels (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Watson & Spence, 2007). Cognitions are thoughts, beliefs, evaluations, judgements, expectancies, goals and desires characterised by the intentional, computational and representational processes of transforming, reducing, elaborating, storing, recovering and using information in the development of cognitive structures and processes (Lee & Allen, 2002; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The cognitive complexity of the cognitive structures, which are different forms of knowledge representations, are indicated in the degree of differentiation, articulation and integration of knowledge units (Levy et al., 2007). Cognitive complexity that is embedded with the cognitive structure represents the same embeddedness in the form of organized informational units or knowledge that defines both the complexity and the structure. According to Levy et al. (2007) cognitively complex people are seekers of information of a wide-ranging and novel nature, and they are adept at interpreting information, drawing inferences and finding novel relations hitherto not recognized. And the cognitive processes are the transforming information processing comprising of searching, selection and retention of information in different meaningful forms (Schneider & Angelmar, 1993). The emotion is basic to human behaviour and as such consumption emotion acquires significance in consumer behaviour like CE. Consumption emotion "refers to the set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences" (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). In the discrete categories of consumption emotion, a customer experiences emotion like joy, surprise or aversion and in the structural dimensions of consumption emotion these are in the patterns of pleasantness/unpleasantness, satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Westbrook Oliver, 1991).

The affective states that go with the customer, whether positive or negative shape up the level

of CE, in which obviously positive states produce positive engagement and negative states produce negative engagement (Doorn et al., 2010). For Doorn et al. (2010) the affective states are not limited to satisfaction, commitment and attachment wherein the implication is that the complex emotionality that go with the customer in either way of positivity or negativity influence CE.

Attachment for "It is an emotion-laden targetspecific bond between a person and a specific object...and stronger attachments associated with stronger feelings of connection, affection, love and passion" (Matthew Thomson et al., 2005). In the emotional language attachment is solidified through the concurrent feelings of relatedness, being endeared to a person (object/product) and moved influenced by the target in a specific manner. Consumer's attachment is also reflective of commitment through which a long-term and sustaining relationship is formed. Commitment is related with positive affect of "affective attachment" wherein the customer builds up an emotional bond with the brand or the product (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Cognition and affect being the central states/process of this approach and the way it assumes importance in the explication of CE is in relation to the information processing interpretation that shapes the behaviour like CE. Holbrook & Hirschman (1982), in explaining the experiential consumption refers to the two information processing systems that focus on the cognitive apparatus of the consumer and the experiential perspective that "focuses on cognitive processes that are subconscious and private in nature".

In accordance with the conceptualization and the empirical evidences of Mischel & Shoda (1995) this "theory deals with (the) cognitive and (the) emotional encoding of information at multiple levels of awareness and automaticity", and for Epstein (2003) the two information processing systems of individuals are the rational system and the experiential system where the former "is an inferential system that operates according to a person's understanding of the rules of reasoning and of evidence". and the latter, the affect-driven system or "the experiential system operates in a manner that is preconscious, automatic, rapid, effortless, holistic, concrete, associative. primarily nonverbal, and minimally demanding of cognitive resources". What is implied here is that human behaviour like CE is understood in the way the two information processing systems of experiential (affect-driven) and rational (knowledge-driven) interact and combine to result in varying psychological states/processes.

The Cognitive-Experiential System Theory (CEST) and Customer Engagement: General Considerations

The general information processing system is characterised by inputs, processes and outputs. The basic design involves the three phases of attention (or information acquisition), interpretation, and action wherein upon attention to the information presented to the customer, the cognitive structures or the knowledge structures process the information, using pre-existing structures and knowledge leading to the formation of new knowledge structures or the modification of the existing ones which are the outcomes at the covert level or enactment of an overt behaviour (Levy et al., 2007). This cognitive system of information processing is primarily knowledge dependent and rules of logic and inference determine the outcome (Epstein, 2003). Other characteristics that go with this system of information processing, according (Epstein, 2003) include cause-and-effect relations, conscious appraisal of events/information, encoding of information in abstract form and highly integrated and differentiated system of thought governed by complexity, analysis and logic.

The experiential system on the other hand processes information loaded with affect 2003). Affect-laden information (Epstein, activate an information-processing unit that is in congruous with it. As identified by (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) "anything that implies important consequences, harmful or beneficial for the individual can generate an emotional reaction" and "the cognitive structures through which they are interpreted and labelled" produce the experiential system of affective-cognition or cognitive-affect. The activation of affect-laden information that is in interaction with the affective-cognitive system is further mediated through the individual differences which are in the form of individual needs and beliefs (Epstein, 2003; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

Experiential system is also exemplified in the preconscious or primary process thinking "in the sense it hearkens back to the way a baby pursues pleasure or gratification" (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). For Epstein (2003) it is further understood in the way encoding is done which are in the form of metaphors, images and narratives besides the features of crude differentiation and integration of process and self-evident validation rather than resorting to logical inferences.

What is evident in the discussion is that cognitive structures and processes and the affective system individually and interactively (or experientially) lay the base of customer engagement, Fig.1.

The consumptive information received from the world of consumption is processed by the cognitive system and the experiential system of the individual consumer. The rational system of cognition that processes information based on the rules of logic and reason (Epstein, 2003). It is studied in relation to the cognitive structures and processes of categories, memory structures representations and inferences. experiential system of cognition and affect is explained in relation to experiential consumption/marketing. consumption schemata, consideration set, implicit consumer cognition and needs that drive engagement.

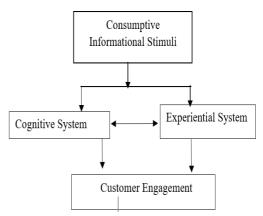


Figure 1: A Cognitive-Experiential System Model of Customer Engagement Source: Author's Study

The Cognitive System and Engagement

Cognitive system/processes information at the conscious and the analytical levels making use of the knowledge structures of semantic networks of association and memory schemata considered to be affect-free, "manifest" content and also labelled "secondary process" Holbrook Hirschman (1982)centering products/market. The consumer's cognitive structure and processes can be studied in relation to their complex knowledge structure. And according to Stubbart (1989) cognitions are representational intentional, computational. "Having reasons and acting intentionally characterize the meaning of intelligence". Rational and reasoned (cognitive) activity reduces the influence of "habits, repertoires and programmed responses" in human behaviour thereby it becomes purely objective and based on economic values. Intentional cognition, that is different from behavioural intention, is with reference to the higher-level cognitive activities of goal-directed

interpretation, reasoned goal formulation and making of plans that further guide the cognitive processes (Kim & Chung, 2011; Stubbart, 1989). Representations are that which represent the reality as perceived and cognitivized by the individual and these are symbolized in the brain (mind). Knowledge representations in the form of declarative, episodic or procedural can be schemas, scripts, rule-based systems, cognitive maps or mental models. The computational function is interpreted in the way a computer program works in a computer and these are the functions of encoding, storing, locating and retrieving information in order to effect changes in the cognitive processes and structures (Stubbart, 1989).

Corresponding to these three cognitions of intention, representations and computation the three overarching characteristics of cognitions are further exemplified in the three cognitive categories, processes ofnetworks inferences, respectively (Stubbart, 1989). Categories being the way of organising concepts, researchers often refer to natural categories, artifact categories and ad hoc categories (Sternberg, 2010). As the name suggests natural categories are formed as they are found in the world. Rice or fruits are examples. The artifact categories are groupings specifically invented for specific purposes like washing powder or four-wheelers. And ad hoc categories are also specifically invented and in comparison to artifact categories, they can differ from person to person or it can vary from time to time (Sternberg, 2010). Barsalou (1983) groups natural and artifact categories as common categories opposed to ad-hoc categories. As far as common categories are concerned, because of the frequent processing in the memory, the associations formed between concepts and performance are of a stronger nature and the categories turn out to be stable. Concept -toinstance associations and instance-to-concept associations in these categories characterised by top-down and bottom-up processing respectively. Top-down processing through its associative processes activate the category members in such instances. For example, activating coffee powder may activate and organize all the common brands under this category. In the same way instance can activate a category list through bottom-up processing. The instance of perceiving an instant coffee powder like Nescafe can activate and organize all the instances under this category list.

Ad-hoc categories in comparison to common categories are weak in activation and associative networks as their representations in memory are also weak, the very nature of ad-hoc categories being that these are of shorter

duration or for specific purposes (Sternberg, 2010). Because these categories are not processed and not represented in memory, creating stronger bonds and nodes, these also lack category -to-instance association and instance-to-category association (Barsalou, 1983).

A cognitive category organizes equivalent concepts where commonality of features or similarity to a prototype becomes the criteria (Sternberg, 2010). Consumers differentiate the products from one another by the use of categories and these structures vary from subordinate ones (homogeneous products) to super ordinate categories (heterogeneous). Grouping and labelling similar products under one category and dissimilar products under another category facilitate quick decision-making and information processing (Johnson & Lehmann, 1997).

Consumers can use categories of different modalities like visual, motor, gustatory, tactile or any aspect that enables them to draw inferences or make decisions or that enhances their knowledge (Star, 2005; Stubbart, 1989). In accordance with their intentional goals or its functional value categories come in different organizations, hierarchy and numbers resulting in what is called cognitive economy at the level of simplification. It has been found that consumers use more abstract attributes in the perception of categories and these are processed in a more hierarchical or top-down fashion and "involve more alternative-based as opposed to attribute-based comparisons" (Johnson Lehmann, 1997).

It has also been found that brand and product categories are represented as independent lists and they resort to feature matching in evaluative situations (Schmitt & Dubé, 1992). Representation of knowledge in the cognitive system is understood in terms of semantic network models, schemas and scripts. Semantic networks, organized according to a "web of interconnected elements of meaning" as used in language, provide a way of processing information in relational and meaningful ways and the concepts are usually arranged in a hierarchical pattern (Sternberg, 2010).

In semantic network models, which is an associative network approach, knowledge is organized in a network of nodes with paths running according to the relational or meaningful patterns and interpretation is through spreading activation implying that associated nodes with sufficient strength (meaning) are connected and weak nodes with weak path are deactivated (Malter, 1996;

Stubbart, 1989). The nodes can represent any phenomena of interest like different product features, brand, price, quality, etc and the paths that connect different nodes can also be represented as forms of conjunctions, disjunctions or quantification (Stubbart, 1989). This semantic network helps the customer to retrieve product knowledge from the memory as strengthen existing connections well as resulting in further integration interpretation (Grebitus & Bruhn, 2006).

network When semantic analysis meaning/relations as used in language to organize concepts, schemata, another form of representation, also organizes concepts and relations and the difference between the two is that schemas are task-based (Sternberg, 2010). According to (Sternberg, 2010) the several characteristics of schemata are that schemas can have sub-schemas, like a schema for computer include desktops, laptops, different brands, windows-based, Mac etc., schemas can encompass knowledge with minor variations beyond the general typical facts and schemata can also vary in their level of abstraction, ranging from low-level abstraction to high-level abstraction, a schemata for global market is different in the level of abstraction compared to a schemata for domestic market. The four mental processes that are characteristic of schemata are the selection of incoming stimuli. mindful presentation and interpretation of the incoming stimuli using the existing knowledge, comprehension and integration of the processed information in the memory (Erasmus et al., 2002).

According to Sternberg (2010) schemata also contain information about relations concepts (the relation between fast food and traditional restaurant food), attributes within concepts (use of petrol and diesel for car) concepts and particular contexts (baby food and the birth rate) and specific concepts and general background (company CEOs and general knowledge about company or firms). Further, schemata are not "things" or objects, or events stored in memory instead they are activated in a network of relations and inter-relations that direct the consumer decision-making (Brown, 1992). Schemata are differentiated in consumer research into knowledge-level or semantic and experiential level or episodic types (Lai, 1994) The key properties of semantic networks are flexibility, inheritance and exceptions activation, reasoning and computation (Stubbart, 1989). Flexibility denotes that knowledge can be represented at many levels of hierarchy that consumers resort to their own concept structure. Inheritance implies that a node can be vested with properties of related

nodes. Exceptions can also be included in the hierarchical structure by showing proper path. The activation property of the network represents that node which are meaningfully related are activated upon the reception of information. Reasoning is the property that gives freedom to the individual to construct or use a network in accordance with his own reasoned preferences. And finally, in computation users can resort to different techniques like maps, matrices and algebra to compute the relations and cause-effect chains.

In the inferential cognitive process, one can trace a movement from complete rationality through bounded rationality and heuristics to the development of expertise (Stubbart, 1989). Gigerenzer & Goldstein (1996) refer to the three views thar are prevalent in the aspect of human inference systems in an unknown environment. the accordance with Enlightenment probabilists, Gigerenzer & Goldstein (1996) "the laws of human inference are the laws of probability and statistic" but in the early nineteenth century, this view crumbled giving way to other views p.650). The second view of heuristics and biases program proves that human reasoning is fraught with biases and errors "suggesting that the laws of inference are quick-and-dirty heuristics and not the laws of probability" (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996). The third view questions the universal notions of classical rationality or "good" reasoning of heuristics and puts forward the view that "information-processing systems typically need to satisfy rather than optimize" (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996). And the new debate focuses on the intuitive and the heuristic inferences (Stubbart, 1989). Thus, in the cognitive system complex and integrated cognitive structures and processes of intentions, representations and computations in the functions of consumer categories, consumer semantic networks and consumer inferences define the level of CE.

The Experiential System and Engagement

The experiential system, which generally and specifically overlaps with the cognitive-affective personality system model of Mischel & Shoda (1995), the Thought-Emotion-Activity-Value (TEAV) view of Holbrook & Hirschman (1982), Schmitt & Dubé (1992) Strategic Experience Modules (SEMs) version of experience, and Brakus et al. (2009) brand experience, the connectionist schemata model of Brown (1992), implicit theory of reality Epstein (2003) and the consumer's consideration set Johnson & Lehmann (1997) encodes information affectively and cognitively that can be emotionally loaded and conceptually based and integrated with

and emotion Epstein (2003)."Although the experiential system is a cognitive system, its operation is intimately related to the experience of affect...the experiential system both influences and is influenced by affect. Not only does the experiential system direct behaviour in a manner anticipated to achieve pleasurable outcomes and to unpleasurable ones, but the cognitions themselves are influenced by affect" (Epstein, 2003).

In the cognitive-affective personality system theory of Mischel & Shoda (1995) the experiential system of covert and overt behavioural processes is explained in the activation of cognitive and affective processes upon receiving the informational stimuli both from the external environment, that is, the consumption situation and the internal environment of thoughts, planning, imagination fantasy. The experientially loaded information from the consumption situation, that is external to the consumer, activate the intra psychic consumption systems with the features of inhibiting and facilitating a pleasant or unpleasant experience of consumption (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

In the further elaboration of the findings of Mischel & Shoda (1995) it is found that the cognitive-affective units of encodings or categories of information pertaining to self, others and situations, expectancies and beliefs connected with the consumption, affective offavourableness reactions unfavourableness, goals and values set and practiced and competencies and self-regulatory plans that have to do with one's own do ables, plans and strategies of affective realms "interact dynamically and influence each other reciprocally, and it is the organization of the relationships among them that forms the core..." of engagement. It is this interaction between the situational features processed as affective information units in the intra psychic subsystems and the reciprocal interaction that sets up between the subsystems that create the engagement levels of the consumer.

Experiential Marketing/Consumption

The notion of experience in the marketing context or in the consumption process, introduced in the 1980's by Holbrook & Hirschman (1982) as "fun, fantasy and amusement" (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) replaced the traditional marketing with experience marketing and rational or instrumental consumption with experiential consumption and researchers find it an effective way of engaging the consumers (Grundey, 2008;

Lofman, 1991).

As conceptualized, experiences that defy rational explanations many a time, are encountered personal states generated at the sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational levels (Grundey, 2008; Schmidt et al., 2015). Everything that engages the individual turn out to be an experience (Walls & Wang, 2011). It suggests that activities of cognitive and affective nature are the basis of generating experiences in states of consciousness. As an amalgamated intra psychic state, experience which is rather long-lasting can differentiated into pleasurable or nonpleasurable processes wherein it is implied that experiential marketing as well as consumption are to be strategically pleasurable and that which engages the customer in the hedonic and positive sense.

As a constellation of many intra psychic states, the experiential system itself, that is the core of experiential marketing and consumption is interpreted by researchers from different angles considering the sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational levels suggested generally. Holbrook & Hirschman (1982) put forward the Thought-Emotion-Activity-Value (TEAV) Model. Along with the cognitive process of thinking, "Thought" also implies dreaming, imaging and fantasising. In the same way, "Emotion" is understood as feelings of mixed diverse nature, enacted emotional behaviours and visceral reactions, "Activity" is constitutive of overt and covert events and "Value" is with reference to an evaluation of consumption in the form of judgements.

In the Schmidt et al. (2015) version of experience, or marketing experience, there are five different strategic experience modules (SEMs) the sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviours, and lifestyles (ACT), and socialidentity experiences (relating to a reference group or culture) (RELATE). The SENSE module-or SENSE marketing- center on the senses that uses five sensory modalities. The FEEL module underlines creating pleasurable inner feelings of joy, delight and satisfaction in the process of consumption that engages the customer at high levels. The THINK module focuses on the "cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively. THINK appeals engage customers' convergent and divergent thinking through surprise, intrigue, and provocation" (Schmidt et al., 2015). The ACT module encourages new ways of doing things and behaving in smart ways thus presenting the customers with an option of a new physical experience in their lives. And

RELATE that includes elements of sense, feel, think and act connects the customer to a larger world of self-improvement and new life style that is part of a new social system, culture and standard.

Similarly, Brakus et al. (2009) delineate brand experience into the four realms of sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural wherein intellectual or cognitive refers to "engage in a lot of thinking ... stimulates my curiosity and problem solving" and affective system denotes "feelings and sentiments".

And in the area of experiential consumption, which share conceptual similarity experiential marketing as both draw upon the experiential dynamics of customers activated by the different sources and contexts informational stimuli, the overarching focus is on the intra psychic experiential system itself. In the same way experiential marketing is explained, experiential consumption can also be constitutive of cognitions and affect in the way experiential system is constituted. The holistic experience of say, satisfaction, is an outcome of consumption activated by a set of psychological experiences and these set of experiences are primarily rooted in the processes of cognition and emotion besides other ones (Bigné et al., 2008). Experiential consumption is thus all about the way consumers understand, evaluate. assimilate, appreciate and use products/services (Holt, 1995). In other words, consumer's cognitive processes of interpretation and evaluations and the affective states of pleasure or displeasure define the very nature of experiential consumption (Andrews et al., 2012). The experiential system being the overarching consideration in experiential marketing and consumption, the two key subsystems are the cognitive and the affective processes. Experiential consumption and marketing can thus be "...organized into two broad constructs or dimensions - the emotive construct and the cognitive construct. Consumers may place a value on their consumer experiences based on their cognitive and emotive perceptions of their encounters with products and services..." This experience of the customer is an intertwined steady state or flow of thoughts (cognitive) and feelings (affective) in the process of customer engagement (Walls & Wang, 2011).

Consumption Schemata

Schemata, which generally can be cognitive representations of both experiential knowledge and general knowledge (the latter discussed in the cognitive system), are mental frameworks of experiences, beliefs and ideas and in the customer context it can be about product choices

or consumer decision-making. The experiential schemata are of the nature of less rational and more of a hedonic nature. Lai (1994) and Lofman (1991) stated "...because affect determines what is attended to and what is reinforced, without affect there would be neither schemas nor motivation in the experiential system, and, therefore, no experiential system" (Epstein, 2003). Experiential schemas are emotionally-driven underlying cognitive structures that process affect-laden information so as to mediate and organize one's everyday experience in the form of episodes (Stubbart, 1989). The experiential schemata in customer experiences or in the consumption experience can be called consumer schemata consumption schemata (Lai, 1994).

Consumer research has relied upon categories of schemata or the patterns of processing in schemata functions (Brown, 1992). Consumption schemata are no different from the general schemata outlined except the experiential loadings that constitute it. Consumption schemata are cognitive structures of product or related aspects that the consumers acquire over the course of consumption that is experience-based (Lai, 1994).

Consumption schemata are developed in relation to various product constellations and interrelated are networks representations of cognitive structures which are affectively loaded information units. In the cognitive theory of schemata development, in accordance with the standard theory, schemata are stored in the network of nodes, using the same model of semantic memory (Brown, 1992). In contrast to the standard theory, in the connectionist approach "the key to knowledge representations lie in the connections among various nodes, not in each individual node" (Sternberg, 2010). Schemata becomes functional in the distinctive patterns/combinations of activations that run through a complex/simple network of units (Brown, 1992).

Through spreading activation, that is the excitation of a node (concept/meaning) that is initiated by an information unit spread to other meaningful connection nodes which understood to be simultaneous or parallel (Sternberg, 2010). In this parallel distributed processing, along with the excitatory effect, some nodes or networks or path can be inhibitive or exercise constrained activation (Brown, 1992). And excitation or inhibition is in relation to the overall structure and dynamics of schemata wherein meanings are created and/or recreated in the cognitive system (Brown, 1992). The dynamic nature of the schemata is implied in the changes being brought in the process of

encountering new situations/episodes. The new information that is processed becomes either integrated with the existing structure or in the light of credible evidences the existing structure is changed and new schemata replaces the old one.

According to Lai (1994) consumption schema has the two parts of the themes or the ideas of the consumption activity, the expectations that the customers hold about the product features or combinations of products and its interrelationships. These experiential schemata that the customers develop are affect-driven as their preferences, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are the criteria of the schemata development. As such these schemata are goal states of consumption that depict a naïve (if not well orchestrated) model of the consumption of the customer.

Using these schema principles of a distinctive pattern with its own interrelationships and functional nature a consumption schema in the use of a car may be specified. The luxury features of a modern car that form a constellation in defining a true or suited luxury one includes new car smell, lamb's wool floor mat, steering wheel warmer, seat coolers, hydrophobic windows, seatbelt extender, powered trunk/lift gate, auto-lane keeping, gentleman function, seat massager etc. As far as the purchase of a luxury car is concerned these and similar features constitute the consumption schemata. In the same way, within these there are also features which are subordinate that define the sub-schemata like the colour of the seat cover or the colour of the mat. These subschemata function in different modes in accordance with the customer's likes and dislikes that define the consumption pattern of a consumer (Lai, 1994).

Consideration Set

Consideration sets are those cognitive and experiential sets of brands/products that customers use in making a purchase or making a consumption decision, underlining the fact that consumers do not generally consider all the available brands/products (Johnson Lehmann, 1997). In the consideration of consideration sets, Kardes et al. (1993) also refer to universal sets and retrieval sets where the former denotes all the brands that are available in the market; locally as well as globally which do not have much practical significance in the case of buyer who buys in a constrained situation. The latter set is a mental structure of memory that the customer can retrieve from the long-term memory. The retrieval is contingent on the strength of the memory of the customer as well as the

conditions that influence the memory process. And the proper consideration set is the subset of the retrieval set that are evaluated and judged to be feasible and practical in the buying situation or those brands which are within the reach of the customer in the consumption process (Kardes et al., 1993). This classical view of consideration set equates it with the sterile categories of customer discussed earlier.

However, the contemporary view is that consideration sets are consistent with customer needs and experience (Johnson & Lehmann, 1997). In this view there tention and the retrieval processes are influenced by customer needs, need arousal, customer experiences and the instances of satisfaction (Johnson & Lehmann, 1997). The experience of the customer largely determines the consideration set and the way it is put into good use in the purchasing situation rather than the process of an objective evaluation of the product or brand features. And what makes a consideration set truly experiential is the finding that needs and internal states of the customer interact in the development of the consideration set. In other words, the retrieval is influenced by subjective factors of need fulfilment, dispositions and emotional experiences that go with the brand/product.

Implicit Consumer Cognition

Implicit cognitions are the traces or remnants of the past experiences influencing the current behaviour in disguised form implying that the consumer is unaware of it (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These are the non-conscious (rather unconscious) cognitions that cannot introspectively identified or remain erroneously identified (Dimofte, 2010; Epstein, 2003; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). For Greenwald & Banaji (1995) unconscious cognitions are studied specifically with reference to attitudes, stereotypes and self-esteem wherein it is empirically proven that attitudes can be activated outside of consciousness, that is without the conscious knowledge of the implicit self-esteem becomes customer. operationalized in the projection of self onto the outside including products and stereotypes as implicit cognitions involve the automatic application of it to objects.

Opposed to explicit cognitions which are easily recognizable, implicit cognitions or implicit attitudes or implicit personality influence the behaviour automatically (Dimofte, 2010). These are the "automatic, preconscious experiential conceptual system that regulates everyday behaviour is of necessity an emotionally driven, dynamic unconscious system" influenced by information processing (Epstein, 2003; Friese et

al., 2006).

Consumer cognitions are studied in different ways because of the fact that consumers are unaware of the biasing stimulus, experiential cognitive processes may mediate between a stimulus and an outcome and the consumers may not have an idea about the way actual outcome is affected.

The implicit consumer preferences of products or services are very much evident in situations where there is no deliberate information processing and conscious monitoring (Friese et al., 2006). The consumer is seen to be engaged in automatic processing of information and making the decision (Epstein, 2003; Friese et al., 2006). Besides the affect-driven nonconscious influence of stored information/schema on consumer decisions. other processes contributing to automatic processes include the need states, the motivation and the opportunity to think through, and the time pressures (Friese et al., 2006). It has been found that beliefs, feelings and behaviours that go with the products or services in question also correlate with the implicit attitudes lending enough credibility to the validity of implicit association in theory and practice (Maison et al., 2001)

Needs that drive the engagement

Needs or motives are fundamental to the experiential system (Epstein, 2003). In Epstein (2003)s Cognitive Experiential Self System Theory the basic four needs that influence the behaviour (consumer behaviour), are pleasure seeking need and the need to minimize pain, the need for relatedness and belonging, the cognitive need to maintain a stable and coherent conceptual system and the need to feel good about oneself or the need to have a positive self-esteem. These needs influence the behaviour in an interactive way implying that in the interaction process, needs with varying strength determine the behaviour, corresponding to the strength of each need.

Consumption behaviour or consumer behaviour is directed towards the meeting of these basic needs in very many different fashions and manners, which is determined by the interactional and the combinational processes (Epstein, 2003; Wörsdorfer, 2010). "Through their basic needs individuals are motivated to engage in consumptive activities" (Wörsdorfer, 2010). The consumptive activities or the engagement are in relation to the types, strength and the activation of the needs and what is understood in the consumer behaviour literature is that products (services) are designed to meet these needs (Heuvel et al., 2007). In other words what is launched in the

market is reflective of the human needs and the consumers are driven to engage in such behaviours seeking satisfaction of their needs.

The structure of human needs is analysed in different patterns including the well-known the hierarchical model of Maslow (Seeley, 1992). In cognitive-experiential system needs/ motives can be discussed at the cognitive as well as at the experiential levels. "Needs operate on motivation at the subconscious level..." (Seeley, 1992) constituting what is called "implicit motives, non-conscious motivational needs that orient, select, and energize behaviour" (Schultheiss, 2008). Needs, or motives, in the experiential system are characterised by an affective component of positive or negative and as such attract or repulse the customers in the consumption process. Needs are generally studied at the conscious level of individuals making conscious choices to meet their needs (Seeley, 1992). In other words, explicit and implicit needs engage the consumer/consumption behaviour. Along with the Epstein (2003) needs, which are more general, the Maslow's needs of physiological, safety and security, love and belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation are found to be directing the consumer behaviour (Seeley, 1992). Another need structure of importance is that of McClelland as suggested by (Schultheiss, 2008) wherein one finds the need for power. need for achievement, need for affiliation and need for intimacy directing the consumption behaviour in an engaged or disengaged way.

Interaction between the Rational System and the Experiential System

The Fig.1 depicts that the two systems operate in parallel and interactive manner which is in accordance with the CEST and other conceptualizations of customer engagement. The distinguishing feature of the experiential system is that it processes information faster than the rational system and it overtakes the functions of the rational system in such a way that many a time the customer lacks an explanation for his engagement. information processing is short-circuited and the customer arrives at an early, quick and automatic decision. In this short-circuiting process experiential schemata or implicit cognitions are the channels by which decisions are taken. The biased taking-over of the function of the rational system can be either in the direction of positive or negative affect rather than an objective evaluation (Epstein, 2003).

The rational system, a slower one, many a time can rectify the inappropriate or so-called irrational or impulsive behaviour triggered by the experiential system. Individuals indulging in impulsive buying, or shopping for pleasure or leisure shopping are instances the rational system can apply its brake to control the behaviour, engagement or otherwise. The rational system can also intervene in the processing of the experiential system by supplying inputs so as to make proper initial responses rather than being fully automatic and this is accomplished through changing the schemata. Moreover, there are two ways by which the rational system can influence the experiential system in an unintentional manner (Epstein, 2003). The associative experiential system is provided with thoughts by the rational system so as to further trigger emotions in the experiential system. A second way by which rational system controls the experiential system is by the repetition of thoughts in the rational system that eventually becomes part of the experiential system.

Conclusions

Engagement whether it is employee engagement or health engagement or customer engagement or other forms of engagement is interpreted to be a psychological state constitutive of core intra psychic subsystems. The intra-individual sub-systems of cognition and affect are the pillars of any modern psychological theory that attempts to explain, control and predict behaviour. The consumer behavioural phenomena ofengagement can also be explained, controlled and predicted within this framework of cognitive-experiential system theory. The interactive cognitive-experiential structures and processes determine the levels and degrees of customer engagement. A business organization can cultivate different levels of engagement through the cognitive experiential system of the customer.

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