



Marketing Intelligence & Planning

A qualitative investigation of e-tail brand affect

Abhigyan Sarkar, Juhi Gahlot Sarkar, Sreejesh S., Anusree M.R.,

Article information:

To cite this document:

Abhigyan Sarkar, Juhi Gahlot Sarkar, Sreejesh S., Anusree M.R., (2018) "A qualitative investigation of e-tail brand affect", Marketing Intelligence & Planning, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2017-0198>

Permanent link to this document:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2017-0198>

Downloaded on: 01 March 2018, At: 22:56 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 48 other documents.

To copy this document: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 8 times since 2018*

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:514693 []

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

*Related content and download information correct at time of download.

A qualitative investigation of e-tail brand affect

E-tail brand
affect

Abhigyan Sarkar

Institute of Management Technology Ghaziabad, Ghaziabad, India

Juhi Gahlot Sarkar

IBS Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

Sreejesh S.

Cochin University of Science and Technology, Cochin, India, and

Anusree M.R.

Rajagiri Centre for Business Studies, Rajagiri Valley, Cochin, India

Received 9 September 2017

Revised 15 September 2017

28 December 2017

26 January 2018

27 January 2018

Accepted 28 January 2018

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to qualitatively investigate various factors associated with e-tail store brand affect.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected by conducting semi-structured depth interviews following a storytelling approach. The data were coded using the grounded theory method.

Findings – Data analysis shows that anticipated service recovery, deal attractiveness and luxury e-tail brand image predict e-tail store brand affect. These predictors play their roles under the moderating influences of specific moderators. The desirable marketing outcomes of e-tail store brand affect are e-tail branded app usage, spreading positive word of mouth and secure attachment style toward e-tailer.

Originality/value – The value of this study lies in developing a grounded theory based causal process model that can provide managerial insights on how to enhance e-tail brand affect.

Keywords Brand affect, E-tailing

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Online retailing or e-tailing has become a dominant sector of contemporary retailing (Wang and Head, 2007). Consumers' repeat purchase intention is very important for the survival of online stores (Chang *et al.*, 2016). Prior research shows that both utilitarian and hedonic shopping values positively impact individual's repeat purchase intention from online store, and perceived risk moderates the impact of both the values on repeat purchase intention (Chiu *et al.*, 2014). Chiu *et al.* (2014) also show that a higher level of perceived risk would reduce the effect of utilitarian value, but increase the effect of hedonic shopping value. This implies that hedonic shopping value helps to mitigate perceived risk in an online shopping context. As perceived risk is highly prevalent in the online shopping context (Ko *et al.*, 2004), the online marketers should continuously try to increase consumers' perceived hedonic shopping value in order to mitigate the effect of perceived risk. Hence, it is important to investigate various factors that can stimulate hedonic e-tail shopping attitude.

Theoretically, hedonic consumption refers to emotional aspect of consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Brand love is a hedonic concept which represents affective/emotional bonding between consumer and brand, and this bonding can be structurally (component wise) analogous to interpersonal love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010; Batra *et al.*, 2012). Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) define brand love as an affective relationship between consumer and brand. According to Oliver (1999), consumption affect predicts irrational intention to consume the object. Hence, it is expected that in an e-tailing context, shopping site affect would also motivate consumers to buy from the site repeatedly. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics of e-tail brand affect. This study qualitatively investigates various factors related to consumer's affect



Marketing Intelligence & Planning

© Emerald Publishing Limited

0263-4503

DOI 10.1108/MIP-09-2017-0198

toward a multi-brand e-tailer, where multi-brand e-tailing refers to selling a variety of brands manufactured by various marketers other than the e-tailer itself (Aghekyan-Simonian *et al.*, 2012). As this study focuses on multi-brand e-tailing, the term “e-tailing” would be used to represent “multi-brand e-tailing” only throughout the remaining paper.

Subsequent sections describe the literature review, methods, study conducted, theoretical and managerial implications of the study.

Literature review

Chang *et al.* (2016) show that online shoppers’ cognitive attitude toward shopping website positively impacts satisfaction with the website, which in turn predicts their purchase intention. It is called affective attitude toward consumption object where the attitude “reflects the pleasure dimension of the satisfaction definition – pleasurable fulfilment” which is an outcome of favorable cognitive attitude (Oliver, 1999, p. 35). Thus, shopping website satisfaction described by Chang *et al.* (2016) includes positive affect.

As brand love is structurally analogous to interpersonal love where the brand is personified in consumer’s perception as a loved partner (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010; Batra *et al.*, 2012). Satisfactory cognitive processing of brand attribute information generates brand affect, and this consumption affect contains “the pleasure dimension” (Oliver, 1999, p. 35). Pleasurable arousals are the core components of passionate interpersonal love (Sternberg, 1986). Hence, Oliver’s (1999) brand affect is posited to be analogous to emotional and passionate attachment or love toward a brand, which is predicted by the perceived hedonism of the product(s) category pertaining to the brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). This brand affect may not be long lasting, and can be terminated anytime due to attractive switching incentives (Oliver, 1999). Thus, individual’s brand affect would be basically romantic in nature, and short-lived, as a consumer can maintain various levels of affective bonding toward multiple brands simultaneously (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016). Romantic love does not include an intention toward long-term loyalty, rather includes only emotion and passion (Sternberg, 1986). Brand love defined by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) is romantic in nature, as it includes emotion and passion, but no intention to commit in the long term.

Brand love can be of different types (Shimp and Madden, 1988; Sarkar *et al.*, 2015). Sarkar and Sarkar (2016) show that brand love develops through a stage-wise psychological process which starts from a non-committed romantic love consisting of emotional intimacy and passion toward multiple brands in a product category (multi-brands romantic love) and eventually leads to a higher level of devotional brand love, characterized by high commitment toward any single brand in the product category (single-brand devotional love). This progression from romantic to devotional brand love can be hindered by various switching incentives like competitors’ offerings. It is therefore very difficult for a marketer to command single-brand devotional love in a highly competitive industry like online retailing. The nature of brand love prevalent in such a competitive industry is likely to be more romantic in nature. The current study focuses on investigating such romantic affect toward e-tail brands. Based on the prior research, the e-tail brand affect is conceptualized as consumer’s romantic and short-term emotion toward e-tail brand. It lacks the determination to be committed to the brand for long term (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016), but can predict irrational brand commitment in future if gets intensified (Oliver, 1999). This kind of romantic brand affect contains short-term brand liking and passionate brand arousals (Shimp and Madden, 1988).

Prior research shows that brand affect predicts brand trust (Lin and Lee, 2012; Singh *et al.*, 2012). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, p. 82) state, “trust involves a calculative process based on the ability of an object or party (e.g. a brand) to continue to meet its obligation” [...] “Overall, we view brand trust as involving a process that is well thought out and carefully considered. Whereas the development of brand affect is more spontaneous,

more immediate, and less deliberately reasoned.” Hence, it is proposed that a consumer trusts a brand when he/she perceives an accumulated positive brand affect. Swaminathan *et al.* (2009) posit that consumer adopting a secure attachment style toward a brand would perceive the brand to be trustworthy. Thus, accumulated brand affect over time would generate secure brand attachment style through the development of brand trust.

As a multi-brand e-tailer sells various brands (Aghekyan-Simonian *et al.*, 2012), it is assumed that overall hedonic image of the e-tailer would be largely derived from the hedonic values of various products sold by the e-tailer, as Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) state that brand love is predicted by the perceived hedonism of product sold under the brand name. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) state that qualitative introspective studies can better explore consumer’s emotional aspects, as compared to overt behavioral research. Hence, this research has used the qualitative grounded theory method to explore e-tail brand affect. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest maintaining a balance between theoretical sensitivity and creative explorations while doing a grounded theory research. In order to adhere to the theoretical sensitivity, this paper describes relevant literature that supports the qualitative findings. However, over-emphasize on reviewing prior literature has been avoided in order to ensure “creativity” which is also an important criterion for an exploratory study. The whole data collection and analysis process also ensured creativity, as the researchers inductively identified various concepts from stories told by the informants.

Methodology

Study context

The study was conducted among adult Indian online shoppers. The compounded annual growth rate of Indian e-commerce industry is significantly higher as compared to offline retail growth, and Indian “shopping malls are suffering from lesser footfalls” (www.gadgetsnow.com/tech-news/Indian-e-commerce-industry-to-post-35-growth-Study/articleshow/48843725.cms). This indicates that online shopping propensity is significantly increasing among Indian shoppers, which makes Indian urban consumers as ideal population for this research. This study has focused on multi-brand e-tailers who sell multiple product brands, and does not investigate single-brand retailers who exclusively sell single private label brands. The rationale for excluding single-brand retailing is that it involves a very different branding approach when compared to multi-brand retailing which needs a separate investigation. The urban consumers were preferred over rural for the reason that internet penetration is higher in urban India.

Respondents’ profiles

Only adult (aged above 18 years) individuals were selected as the target informants. It was assumed that adults would significantly be able to introspect against researchers’ probing questions when compared to minors. In the grounded theory research, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest to create as much variation as possible in the data. Recent research in Indian online shopping context shows that consumers’ online shopping propensity significantly varies depending on gender (Khare and Rakesh, 2011) and age groups (please see www.statista.com/statistics/499199/regular-online-shoppers-age-group-india/). Prior research also shows that Indian consumers’ retail format choice would vary depending on occupation (Prasad and Aryasri, 2011).

In order to create larger variations in the data, the researchers selected informants belonging to a wider demographic range, especially in terms of age and maintained almost 50 percent male to female ratio in different occupational groups. The informants’ ages ranged between 18 and 67 years with an average of 39.35. After completing the interviews of 46 informants, theoretical saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was reached as no new

concept was emerging. A total of 21 respondents were males. The self-reported gross annual family incomes of the informants ranged between 2,371,528 and 927,635 Indian rupees with an average of 1,639,726. Out of total 46 informants, 24 (11 males and 13 females) were service holders, 5 (2 males and 3 females) were graduate students and the remaining 17 informants (8 males and 9 females) were self-employed.

Sampling

The researchers selected the respondents purposefully, as Patton (2002, p. 230) states, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth." The central issue of the research was "e-tail brand affect." In order to understand whether any informant would prove to be information-rich, the researchers posited a screening question: "We are conducting an academic research on e-tail brand emotion. If you think that you significantly shop online rather than offline, you can contribute to our investigation by describing your shopping experiences with various e-tailers. Your responses would be kept strictly confidential. Do you think that you would be able to contribute?" This screening question was asked to any informant during the first meeting, and the appointments were fixed for interviewing only with those informants who gave affirmative responses to the screening question. The informants were initially contacted by a group of trained research associates by making cold callings in various colleges, office premises and residential areas, and appointments were fixed. Later, main interviews were taken by the researchers at informants' convenient times and places (college premises, offices and houses).

Data collection process

Semi-structured depth interviewing with the storytelling approach was followed (Sarkar *et al.*, 2015; Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016). The researchers asked probing questions to the informants to tell their past/lived experiences with various e-tailers in a story-like format. The nature of probing questions was dependent on the flow of interviews. Few examples of probing questions are: Please tell any highly satisfactory or dissatisfactory experiences with any e-tailer; Why were you dissatisfied with e-tailer (X) and switched to e-tailer (Y)? What are the reasons that you make most of your purchases from e-tailer (Z)? All interviews were audio taped and transcribed for coding purpose.

Data analysis

Data collection and coding were done simultaneously (Urquhart *et al.*, 2010). Open, axial and systematic coding methods were followed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The researchers started coding with a key research concept (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) or a seed concept (Urquhart *et al.*, 2010) which was "e-tail brand affect." Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 63) suggest conceptualizing the existing data by "taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph, and giving each discrete incident, idea, or event a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon." Our coding was mostly done paragraph by paragraph. Through open coding, different concepts along with their specific properties emerged through continuous comparisons of different paragraphs inductively. The concepts inductively derived through open coding were then named deductively after matching their respective properties with the descriptions in the relevant literature. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest, "The literature can be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity" (p. 50). Next, through axial coding, the researchers first inductively established causal and/or intervening or moderating relationships between two or more concepts based on continuous comparisons, and then deductively validated the relationships based on literature. Causality was established between any two concepts, and in few cases, a moderating concept impacted any causal path either

positively or negatively. Then various inter-relationships between concepts were integrated at a broader level through systematic coding. In the “Findings” section, various inter-relationships are described with supporting interview quotes and relevant literature support. Due to space constraint, only the most representative quotes are given in the “Findings” section out of many obtained.

Reliability and validity tests

Each researcher first did open and axial coding individually which was followed by mutual discussion. Thus, only mutually agreed upon concepts and relationships were retained. Member check was done by going back to each respondent second time while doing the coding to ensure that researchers’ interpretations matched with what the respondents actually intended to mean (Bitsch, 2005).

Findings

Every inter-relationship between concepts identified in this section is stated in terms of Statement of Relationship (SoR) as suggested by Sarkar and Sarkar (2016). Mainly two types of inter-relationships were identified: direct causal, and moderating or intervening following Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) axial coding paradigm model.

Domination of brand affect

Our interview descriptions show that consumers mostly feel romantic multi-brands affect (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016; Oliver, 1999) toward competing e-tailers representing short-term liking, and not absolute single-brand devotion (Pichler and Hemetsberger, 2007; Hemetsberger *et al.*, 2009). The probable reasons behind multi-brand romantic affect dominating single-brand devotion in the Indian e-tail context are “rapid growth and fierce competition on the internet” shopping domain (Yun and Good, 2007, p. 4). This is evident from the quotes below:

There was a time when I used to buy from Flipkart only. Then Amazon started providing more attractive offers and deals. Now I have completely switched to Amazon. This site’s offers are so good. If Amazon continues like this, it will be a tough time for others to survive (Gender: male; age: 33).

The description shows how, depending on the attractiveness of offers (switching incentives), consumers tend to change their e-tailers which is the primary characteristic of brand affect (Oliver, 1999). Another informant described in the similar line:

I buy from several online stores. I have several shopping apps installed in my smartphone. These days you know that different e-tailers are providing bounty of exciting offers for different products. I look at the offers from alternate stores, and click the one providing the best offers (Gender: female; age: 41).

The above description reinforces that e-tail market is dominated by short-lived and romantic brand affect. This brand affect can be caused by several factors as revealed by our research.

Causal antecedents of e-tail brand affect

Anticipated service recovery

Service recovery is the process of responding to a service failure experienced by a service customer adopted by service provider (Gronroos, 1988). Justice theory is the basis for service recovery (Ha and Jang, 2009). In the online shopping context, service failure is inevitable (Kuo and Wu, 2012). Service recovery can trigger positive consumer emotion and restore lost

customer satisfaction (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Kuo and Wu, 2012). Our interview descriptions support this. For example:

Once I bought a book through Flipkart. There were two pages missing in the book. I got very irritated, and lunched a complaint. They replaced my book within next 2 days with a sincere apology, and without any delivery charge. I was really pleased with their prompt response. Since then I make most of my online purchases through Flipkart only (Gender: male; age: 33).

The above informant started feeling a positive brand affect especially after the service recovery (book replacement). Another informant described:

Once I ordered for a Dell laptop through Amazon. My order included a 500 GB hard disk also. When the delivery came, I didn't find the hard disk. I was so dissatisfied, as I had already paid online before taking the delivery. However, they sincerely apologized and delivered me the hard disk very soon. Since then I trust Amazon, and make most of my purchases through Amazon. Placing orders with Amazon gives me peace of mind. Delivery related problem can occur anytime in online shopping. However, I would rely on the service provider who would assure me a prompt redressal (Gender: female; age: 42).

The above informant developed an enhanced emotional liking toward Amazon after the service recovery (hard disk event) took place. The expressions like "gives me peace of mind. Delivery related problem can occur anytime in online shopping. However, I would rely on the service provider who would assure me a prompt redressal" show that the informant perceives a reduced performance risk and high anticipated service recovery in case of Amazon.

Performance risk is defined as "the loss incurred when a brand or product does not perform as expected" (Forsythe and Shi, 2003, p. 869). In e-tailing, anticipated delivery problem would be an important perceived performance risk, as delivery is an important function performed by an e-tailer (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004). The above quotes related to Flipkart and Amazon reflect that individual's perceived performance risk positively moderates the positive impact of anticipated service recovery on e-tail brand affect. In other words, an online buyer having a higher perceived performance risk a priori would be emotionally more influenced by anticipated service recovery. This is evident in the expressions like, "Delivery related problem can occur anytime in online shopping" that the consumer with high perceived risk would be more sensitive about service recovery. Anticipated service recovery directly impacts trusting the e-tailer as is evident through the statements like "Since then I trust Amazon." This feeling of informant is very similar to the feeling of "being able to count on the loved one" (Sternberg, 1986, p. 121) which is an important property of intimacy toward partner (i.e. e-tail brand) which is largely derived from emotion or affect. Brand trust is reinforced by brand affect (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Prior research shows that perceived brand ethicality positively impacts brand affect (Singh *et al.*, 2012). This is supported by the above quotes, as anticipated service recovery is equivalent to perceiving the e-tail brand to be ethical which in turn positively impacts e-tail brand affect.

Hence, we propose the following relationships:

SoR 1: Anticipated service recovery positively impacts e-tail brand affect.

SoR 2: Individual's perceived performance risk positively moderates the relationship between anticipated service recovery and brand affect.

Cognitive promotional attractiveness

Following stimulus-organism-response paradigm, sales promotional offers in the online shopping context act as useful cues for cognitive evaluation, and favorable cognitive evaluation positively impacts purchase intention (Park and Lennon, 2009). Oliver (1999) supports that favorable cognitive processing of informational cues predicts consumption affect.

A significant percentage of online shoppers are price sensitive (Ganesh *et al.*, 2010). Our interview descriptions support that cognitive promotional attractiveness positively impacts e-tail brand affect, and this impact is positively moderated by individual's price sensitivity. For examples:

I love to buy at discounted prices from these e-tailers. If I go to buy them offline, I would not get this attractive deals or discounts or coupons. Hot deals are my main motivations behind buying online leaving offline. Hence, before buying I search for good deals, and based on that only, I chose the site to buy (Gender: female; age: 32).

Thanks to Amazon for offering a great combination of selections, services and low prices. I signed up for Amazon Prime, and got access to a library of free streaming movies, music, TV shows and e-books. By joining Amazon Prime, I get discount on all physical copies of recently released games. I love Amazon as I want to get exciting things at exciting prices also (Gender: male; age: 27).

The descriptions show how perceived attractiveness of promotional offers impacts e-tail brand affect, and this impact is positively stimulated by individual's price sensitivity. The expressions like "Hot deals are my main motivations behind buying online" and "I want to get exciting things at exciting prices also" show that the informants are price sensitive, and that is why they are liking the offers.

Hence, it is proposed:

SoR 3: Cognitive promotional attractiveness positively impacts e-tail brand affect.

SoR 4: The impact of promotional attractiveness on e-tail brand affect is positively moderated by individual's price sensitivity.

Price sensitivity vs willingness to pay premium price

In a multi-brand retail format, many brands produced by various manufacturers are sold by retailer instead of selling one exclusive brand (Mukherjee *et al.*, 2012). Every brand in the portfolio of a multi-brand e-tailer would have an image (Reza and Samiei, 2012). Hence, it is posited that the overall image of a multi-brand e-tailer is constituted by the images of various product brands included in its portfolio. If the constituent brands in a portfolio are largely having luxury images (Sung *et al.*, 2015), the e-tail brand would also obtain an overall luxury image. Luxury brand image refers to high-price and high-quality image (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2016). The store image is formed based on consumer's subjective perceptions of various attributes, and product brand assortment maintained by the store would act as an important attribute (Chang and Tseng, 2013). One informant described:

I get fascinated whenever I enter Amazon Fashion. All luxury brands are so nicely assorted. Here I find the collections from my most favourite style icon Sarah Jessica Parker. I get revitalized when I shop from Amazon Fashion where luxury is really redefined (Gender: female; age: 43).

Here, the wide assortment of luxury product brands generates an overall luxurious image of the e-tailer. Individual aspiring for buying luxury brands would be willing to pay premium price also (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2016). Supporting this, our informant described:

When I buy from Amazon Fashion, I don't expect much price cut. I expect exclusive brands, and I definitely get that in Amazon Fashion. I am willing to pay for better quality, and Amazon Fashion means high quality. That is why I love Amazon Fashion (Gender: female; age: 39).

A luxury brand signals extrinsic aspirational elements i.e. self-esteem that positively impacts brand attachment or brand affect, and individual aspiring for luxury brand would be less price sensitive or willing to pay price premium (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2016). Reduced price sensitivity in luxury brand aspiration context is reflected in the quotes like, "I don't expect much price cut" and "I am willing to pay for better quality."

MIP

Hence, it is posited that consumer's price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium are negatively correlated, and this negative correlation would also depend on the store image. If a consumer is positively influenced by the luxury store image, this will enhance his/her brand affect, given that the consumer is not price sensitive. On the contrary, a store with a value for money image would make a consumer motivated to get more value at a lesser price. One informant told:

I prefer to buy things online instead of visiting offline, as few online retailers are offering more discounts on various products. Today every e-tailer is offering similar brands in any product. Hence, I will buy from the e-tailer which would offer me things at reasonable prices. In that respect, I prefer Snapdeal compared to Amazon or Flipkart (Gender: male; age: 39).

Snapdeal developed an image of a low-price retailer in the informant's eyes, and the informant would prefer Snapdeal compared to others, as the informant is a low-price seeker. The above quotes reflect the negative association between price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium depending on the image of e-tailer:

SoR 5: Individual's price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium price are negatively correlated. However, the intensity of this negative correlation would depend on the store image i.e. either luxury or value for money.

Luxury e-tailer image and willingness to pay premium price

Sreejesh *et al.* (2016) state that consumers who aspire to buy luxury would be willing to pay premium price. The descriptions below reflect that:

I have a strong fascination for buying luxury. I like Amazon Fashion, even after they charge little high prices for its several brands. I like it and always buy fashion products from it, as I am little bit more quality conscious while buying luxury, and also willing to pay for that. At Amazon Fashion, high quality is assured (Gender: male; age: 35).

This description shows that the luxury brand image impacts consumer's brand affect as expressed through the statements like "I like it and always buy fashion products from it." The positive impact of such luxury brand image on brand affect is conditional, as this impact would be positively moderated by consumer's willingness to pay premium. The above informant is willing to pay premium as reflected in the statements like "I am little bit more quality conscious while buying luxury, and also willing to pay for that." In summary, a consumer with a higher willingness to pay price premium to consume luxury would feel greater brand affect due to perceived luxury image of e-tailer compared to another consumer having a lower willingness to pay premium, as luxury aspiration and willingness to pay premium are positively associated (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2016). The same is reflected in the description below:

I always order my wines from Brindco. I simply love Brindco, as it stocks vintage wines from all countries. I have no problem in paying the price when I am getting quality (Gender: Male; age: 37).

Hence, we propose:

SoR 6: Consumer's willingness to pay premium positively moderates the impact of luxury e-tail brand image on e-tail brand affect.

Big middle shopping attitude

Based on the Big Middle Theory, Ganesh *et al.* (2010) postulate that both online and offline retail customers can be broadly classified as low-price seekers vs innovation (high quality and high-end luxury value) seekers, and big middle is the retail space where retailers hybridize their offerings to satisfy both the groups. This implies that different retail

customers would have different scores on low-price seeking and luxury seeking, and perfectly hybridized customers are those for whom the negative association between price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium to buy luxury would be the modest. Levy *et al.* (2005) state, “Big Middle retailers possess an entirely different position in the marketplace, from which they offer innovative merchandise (variety and breadth of stock keeping units) at reasonable prices. They successfully have transformed perceptions of themselves from innovative leaders or low-price leaders to a hybrid of the two that appeals to a much larger customer base” (p. 85).

The following description reflects this hybridized attitude:

I never compromise with quality. My possessions include premium brands which are of high quality. I also buy most of my purchases online rather than offline. The reason is that I can get attractive discounts online, and if I buy the same brands offline, I would get lesser discounts. I am a member of Elite Deal Club through which I purchase Amazon’s hottest luxury gadgets at low prices compared to offline. I love Elite Deal Club (Gender: male; age: 43).

Here, the informant focuses on luxury shopping at discounted/reasonable prices which refers to hybridized big middle shopping attitude. The informant psychologically balances between low-price seeking and paying premium to buy luxury. Due to the hybridization, the negative association between price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium price is reduced. Another informant described:

I love Theoutnet.com. Recently I purchased one of my favourite luxury apparel brand Helmut Lang at a 65% discount from it. I love it when I get luxurious brands at such a fair prices (Gender: female; age: 37).

Another informant described:

I make my luxury shopping from Bluefly.com. It is simply amazing. It has rich assortment of luxury products at reasonable discounts. When I need to buy luxurious items, I don’t expect a very handsome discount that I can get from a roadside shopper. However, I want a reasonable discount on the premium charged while shopping online. I get that from Bluefly (Gender: female; age: 29).

In the above descriptions “hybridized big middle shopping attitude” is reflected in the statements like “I get luxurious brands at such a fair prices” and “I want a reasonable discount on the premium charged while shopping online.” Desire to possess quality at reasonable prices refer to hybridized big middle shopping attitude (Ganesh *et al.*, 2010) that reduces the extreme negative association between price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium price. Hence, we propose:

SoR 7: Hybridized big middle shopping attitude negatively moderates the negative correlation between individual’s price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium price such a manner that a balanced attitude is achieved.

The above descriptions explain how various psychological antecedents and moderating factors would generate e-tail brand affect.

Outcomes of e-tail brand affect

Brand affect can be terminated anytime due to switching incentives (Oliver, 1999). Internet shopping is dominated by perceived risks which include performance (i.e. delivery) risks, and consumers switch brands based on perceived risks (Garbarino and Strahilevitz, 2004). Hence, in order to sustain brand relationship, consumer should feel securely attached to brand. Individual would be securely attached to relationship partner when he/she would be less anxious about being neglected by the partner, and also less avoidant toward emotional involvement based on mutual trust (Simpson, 1990; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009). Brand trust is caused by accumulated affect (Singh *et al.*, 2012; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Lin and Lee, 2012).

Our interview descriptions support that affective brand relationship, if continued, would generate secure brand attachment style through fostering trust. One informant described:

Travelling is my hobby, and I go for travelling very frequently. Few years ago also, I used to book my flights and hotels online through Yatra.com. More than once I had bad experiences with Yatra. For example, I booked a hotel in Goa after reading very good reviews and looking at good photos given in their site. When I arrived at the place, I found the hotel literally bad in terms of its services and accommodation quality. Similar thing happened when I went to Shimla after booking through Yatra. Hence, I switched to Makemytrip.com. I did not experience such disappointment till date after making several trips through Makemytrip. I feel that Makemytrip takes more genuine care of me than Yatra (Gender: Male; age: 45).

The description shows that the informant started feeling insecure in his relationship with Yatra.com as he could not trust the services offered by it. The informant started liking (positive affect) Makemytrip, and this liking accumulated over several occasions developed secure brand attachment style via generating trust. The statement like, "I feel that Makemytrip takes more genuine care of me" shows that the informant is securely attached to Makemytrip. Trust is developed as the informant says, "I did not experience such disappointment till date after making several trips through Makemytrip." Another informant told:

Snapdeal is really pathetic in terms of customer support. Several times my orders were returned saying undeliverable without I received any call from the courier guys saying that my order would have come. My trust on Snapdeal was completely broken, and I switched to Flipkart. It is very good, and really takes care of customer satisfaction throughout the whole process (Gender: female; age: 51).

The description shows that the informant developed an insecure attachment style toward Snapdeal due to lack of trust, and a secure attachment style toward Flipkart as a result of accumulated affective relationship giving rise to brand trust. The secure attachment orientation is reflected in the statements like, "really takes care of customer satisfaction throughout the whole process." Accumulated brand affect is reflected in expression like, "It is very good." Another informant described:

I have experiences with several shopping sites. I have a long lasting relationship with Amazon. I would say that Amazon is very reliable in terms of timely delivery and lesser failure. I can't recall any event of getting faulty product delivery from Amazon. Hence, I mostly buy from Amazon (Gender: male; age: 53).

Here, the informant's accumulated affective brand liking generated brand trust, and trust in turn created secure brand attachment style. Trust is the core of secure brand attachment (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009).

Hence, we propose:

SoR 8: Accumulated e-tail brand affect would make consumer securely attached to e-tail brand through developing brand trust.

Our interview descriptions reveal two other important behavioral outcomes of e-tail brand affect namely e-tail branded app usage, and spreading positive word of mouth (WoM). The following informants described:

Usually I buy most of my things from Amazon since last several years. It provides a very good service and a very less scope for complaining. I use the Amazon Now app. I make all my payments through Amazon app as I feel that it is secure. Amazon is simply unbeatable. I also recommend amazon to my friends (Gender: female; age: 36).

For my online purchases, I am blindly dependent on Amazon since long. As I am a delighted customer of Amazon, I am a user of Amazon app. It is like a mega-mall of the internet. I find practically any kind of product I can think of. Amazon Pantry allows me to shop for food and beverage items. It is very quick, simple and easy to understand. I always recommend it to my friends (Gender: male; age: 27).

Emotional brand affection motivates consumer to maintain proximity with the focal brand (Thomson *et al.*, 2005). Hence, consumer affectively liking a shopping site is likely to use the branded app of the site to maintain proximity with the site. Individual who affectively likes a shopping site would also spread positive WoM about the site, as affective bonding with brand predicts WoM (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). The descriptions like “Usually I buy most of my things from Amazon since last several years” reflect that consumer’s affective brand liking created a securely attached bonding with the e-tailer. The secure attachment style is reflected in the expressions like, “I make all my payments through Amazon app as I feel that it is secure.” The same is reflected in the other expression like, “For my online purchases, I am blindly dependent on Amazon since long.” The secure brand attachment style developed motivated the respondents more to use branded apps and spreading positive WoM.

Attachment style adopted toward consumption object would moderate consumer responses (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009). The above descriptions show that the impacts of e-tail brand affect on app usage and WoM have been intensified or positively moderated by the secure brand attachment style. For example, the respondent uses Amazon app mostly and spread positive WoM, because he is completely dependent (secure attachment) on Amazon. Hence, we propose:

SoR 9: E-tail brand affect predicts e-tail branded app usage.

SoR 10: E-tail brand affect predicts spreading positive WoM about the e-tail brand.

SoR 11: Consumer’s secure attachment style moderates the effects of brand affect on app usage and positive word of mouth.

The causal grounded theory process model for e-tail brand affect shown in Figure 1 is developed based on the above data analyses. In the model, each single-headed arrow flows from a predictor to respective outcome concept, and double-headed arrow connects two correlated concepts. Arrow from any moderator points to the path being moderated. The positive and negative signs within parentheses adjacent to various paths denote positive and negative relationships, respectively.

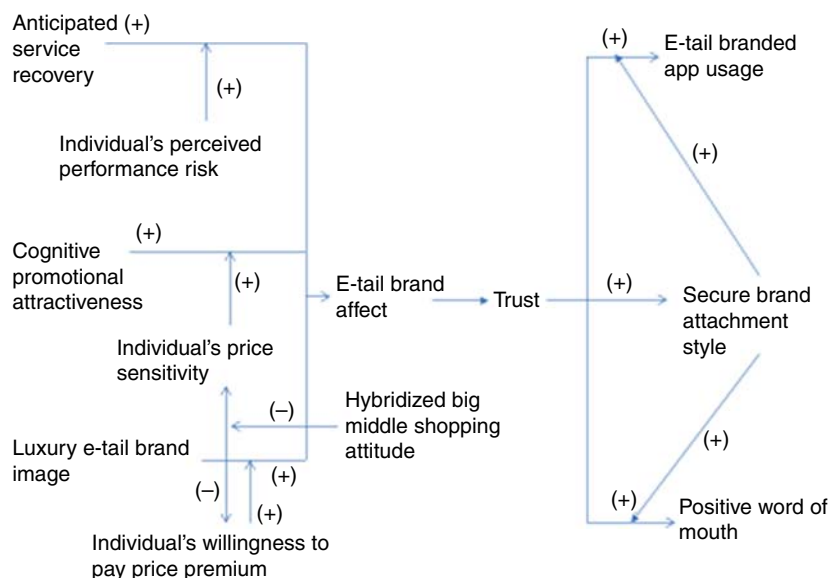


Figure 1.
Grounded theory
framework for e-tail
brand affect

In addition to the above qualitative analysis of data, certain quantitative analyses were also performed. To check for inter-rater reliability Cohen's κ value was computed following Stemler (2001). κ represents the inter-rater reliability in terms of the agreement between the researchers (here two researchers did the rating) in relation to whether the concepts extracted above did really come out from different quotes (paragraphs) transcribed. The overall κ value was 0.72 which is satisfactory according to Stemler (2001).

The frequencies with which different concepts emerged from the interviews of 46 informants are shown in Table I.

Theoretical contributions

This study provides a grounded theory model showing the psychological processes through which individual's e-tail brand affect can be generated, which in turn develops secure brand attachment style through the mediation of brand trust. The grounded theory data analyses show that anticipated service recovery positively impacts e-tail brand affect, and this impact is positively moderated by perceived delivery related performance risk. Promotional/deal attractiveness also positively impacts e-tail brand affect, and this impact is positively moderated by individual's price sensitivity. The positive impact of luxury e-tail brand image on brand affect is also positively moderated by individual's willingness to pay premium price. The negative association between individual's price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium price is mitigated by hybridized big middle shopping attitude of consumer. On the other hand, e-tail brand affect predicts e-tail branded app usage, positive WoM and e-tail brand trust. Brand affect creates brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), and affective brand trust drives secure brand attachment style (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009).

It is to be noted that brand affect can be short-lived (Sarkar and Sarkar, 2016), but secure attachment style would be enduring, as it is fostered by brand trust. The theoretical contributions of the study lie in identifying significant moderators moderating the effects of selected predictors on e-tail brand affect, the moderating role played by the big middle shopping attitude in mitigating the negative association between price sensitivity and willingness to pay premium and the role played by the secure brand attachment style in moderating the impacts of e-tail brand affect on branded app usage and positive WoM.

Managerial implications

It is challenging for e-tail managers to sustain e-tail brand affect amongst the target customers. They need to strategically manipulate the actionable antecedents identified.

Concepts emerged	Number	Percentage
E-tail brand affect	44	95
Service recovery	28	60
Perceived performance risk	21	45
Promotional attractiveness	26	56
Price sensitivity	19	41
Luxury e-tail brand image	32	69
Willingness to pay price premium	29	63
Hybridized big middle shopping attitude	27	58
Brand trust	39	84
Branded app usage	27	58
Secure brand attachment style	22	47
Positive word of mouth	29	63

Table I.
The concept frequencies

Notes: The second column denotes number of respondents mentioning each concept. The third column denotes percentage calculated out of total 46 informants

Service failure is inevitable in the e-tail context. The managers must develop proper mechanism of prompt service recovery. The antecedents of e-tail affect identified in this study point to the alternative strategies that managers can take depending on their target markets. If an e-tailer targets price-sensitive customers, it has to offer attractive deals. An e-tailer targeting luxury-seeking customers has to focus on those who would be willing to pay premium. Any e-tailer can follow a balanced approach by maintaining quality at a reasonable price and targeting big middle shoppers. The impacts of all specific antecedents of e-tail affect will depend on the specific moderators. E-tailers should conduct psychographic studies among customers in order to identify the customers with secure attachment styles. The e-tailer should then design its marketing strategies with prime focus on securely attached consumers, as secure attachment style would foster app usage and spreading WoM.

Limitations and future research directions

Like majority of other qualitative studies, this study also suffers from certain limitations. The model is qualitative and should be quantitatively validated by future research. The model does not include the roles played by various store environmental cues like lighting and interior in shaping brand affect, whereas store environmental cues can also significantly impact store affect. The probable roles played by some interesting individual specific factors have been ignored by this study like individual's technology readiness, which can be explored in future research.

References

- Aghekyan-Simonian, M., Forsythe, S., Kwon, W.S. and Chattaraman, V. (2012), "The role of product brand image and online store image on perceived risks and online purchase intentions for apparel", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 325-331.
- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A.C. and Bagozzi, R.P. (2012), "Brand love", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 76 No. 2, pp. 1-16.
- Bergkvist, L. and Bech-Larsen, T. (2010), "Two studies of consequences and actionable antecedents of brand love", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 17 No. 7, pp. 504-518.
- Bitsch, V. (2005), "Qualitative research: a grounded theory example and evaluation criteria", *Journal of Agribusiness*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 75-91.
- Carroll, B. A. and Ahuvia, A.C. (2006), "Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love", *Marketing Letters*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 79-89.
- Chang, E.C. and Tseng, Y.F. (2013), "Research note: E-store image, perceived value and perceived risk", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66 No. 7, pp. 864-870.
- Chang, S.H., Chih, W.H., Liou, D.K. and Yang, Y.T. (2016), "The mediation of cognitive attitude for online shopping", *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 618-646.
- Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook, M.B. (2001), "The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 65 No. 2, pp. 81-93.
- Chebat, J.C. and Slusarczyk, W. (2005), "How emotions mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations: an empirical study", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58 No. 5, pp. 664-673.
- Chiu, C.M., Wang, E.T., Fang, Y.H. and Huang, H.Y. (2014), "Understanding customers' repeat purchase intentions in B2C e-commerce: the roles of utilitarian value, hedonic value and perceived risk", *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 85-114.
- Forsythe, S.M. and Shi, B. (2003), "Consumer patronage and risk perceptions in Internet shopping", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 56 No. 11, pp. 867-875.

- Ganesh, J., Reynolds, K.E., Lockett, M. and Pomirleanu, N. (2010), "Online shopper motivations, and e-store attributes: an examination of online patronage behaviour and shopper typologies", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 86 No. 1, pp. 106-115.
- Garbarino, E. and Strahilevitz, M. (2004), "Gender differences in the perceived risk of buying online and the effects of receiving a site recommendation", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 57 No. 7, pp. 768-775.
- Gronroos, C. (1988), "Service quality: the six criteria of good perceived service quality", *Review of Business*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 10-13.
- Ha, J. and Jang, S.C. (2009), "Perceived justice in service recovery and behavioural intentions: the role of relationship quality", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 319-327.
- Hemetsberger, A., Kittinger-Rosanelli, C.M.T. and Friedmann, S. (2009), "Bye bye love – why devoted consumers break up with their brands?", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 36, pp. 430-437.
- Hirschman, E.C. and Holbrook, M.B. (1982), "Hedonic consumption: emerging concepts, methods and propositions", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 46 No. 3, pp. 92-101.
- Khare, A. and Rakesh, S. (2011), "Antecedents of online shopping behavior in India: an examination", *Journal of Internet Commerce*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 227-244.
- Ko, H., Jung, J., Kim, J. and Shim, S.W. (2004), "Cross-cultural differences in perceived risk of online shopping", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 20-29.
- Kuo, Y.F. and Wu, C.M. (2012), "Satisfaction and post-purchase intentions with service recovery of online shopping websites: perspectives on perceived justice and emotions", *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 127-138.
- Levy, M., Grewal, D., Peterson, R.A. and Connolly, B. (2005), "The concept of the 'Big Middle'", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 81 No. 2, pp. 83-88.
- Lin, M.Q. and Lee, B.C. (2012), "The influence of website environment on brand loyalty: brand trust and brand affect as mediators", *International Journal of Electronic Business Management*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 308-321.
- Mukherjee, A., Satija, D., Goyal, T.M., Mantrala, M.K. and Zou, S. (2012), "Are Indian consumers brand conscious? Insights for global retailers", *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 482-499.
- Oliver, R.L. (1999), "Whence consumer loyalty?", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63, Special Issue, pp. 33-44.
- Park, M. and Lennon, S.J. (2009), "Brand name and promotion in online shopping contexts", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 149-160.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Pichler, E.A. and Hemetsberger, A. (2007), "Hopelessly devoted to you: towards an extended conceptualization of consumer devotion", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 34, pp. 194-199.
- Prasad, J.C. and Aryasri, R.A. (2011), "Effect of shopper attributes on retail format choice behaviour for food and grocery retailing in India", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 68-86.
- Reza, J. M. and Samiei, N. (2012), "The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: an empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 460-476.
- Sarkar, A. and Sarkar, J.G. (2016), "Devoted to you my love: brand devotion amongst young consumers in emerging Indian market", *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 180-197.
- Sarkar, J.G., Sarkar, A. and Ponnampalasa, A. (2015), "Exploration of brand sacralization among the young adult consumers in the context of emerging Asian market", *Young Consumers*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 264-280.
- Shimp, T.A. and Madden, T.J. (1988), "Consumer-object relations: a conceptual framework based analogously on Sternberg's triangular theory of love", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 163-168.

- Simpson, J.A. (1990), "Influence of attachment styles on romantic relationships", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 59 No. 5, pp. 971-980.
- Singh, J.J., Iglesias, O. and Batista-Foguet, J.M. (2012), "Does having an ethical brand matter? The influence of consumer perceived ethicality on trust, affect and loyalty", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 111 No. 4, pp. 541-549.
- Sreejesh, S., Sarkar, A. and Roy, S. (2016), "Validating a scale to measure consumer's luxury brand aspiration", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 465-478.
- Stemler, S. (2001), "An overview of content analysis", *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, Vol. 7 No. 17, pp. 137-146.
- Sternberg, R.J. (1986), "A triangular theory of love", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 93 No. 2, pp. 119-135.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publication, New Delhi.
- Sung, Y., Choi, S.M., Ahn, H. and Song, Y.A. (2015), "Dimensions of luxury brand personality: scale development and validation", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 121-132.
- Swaminathan, V., Stille, K.M. and Ahluwalia, R. (2009), "When brand personality matters: the moderating role of attachment styles", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 35 No. 6, pp. 985-1002.
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D.J. and Park, C.W. (2005), "The ties that bind: measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 77-91.
- Urquhart, C., Lehmann, H. and Myers, M.D. (2010), "Putting the 'theory' back into grounded theory: guidelines for grounded theory studies in information systems", *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 357-381.
- Wang, F. and Head, M. (2007), "How can the web help build customer relationships? An empirical study on e-tailing", *Information & Management*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 115-129.
- Yun, Z.S. and Good, L.K. (2007), "Developing customer loyalty from e-tail store image attributes", *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 4-22.

Further reading

- Asthana, S. (2014), "5 things you didn't know about India's e-commerce industry", available at: www.business-standard.com/article/companies/5-things-you-didn-t-know-about-india-s-e-commerce-industry-114111201035_1.html (accessed October 24, 2016).
- Bellman, S., Potter, R.F., Treleaven-Hassard, S., Robinson, J.A. and Varan, D. (2011), "The effectiveness of branded mobile phone apps", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 191-200.
- Martinsons, M.G. (2008), "Relationship-based e-commerce: theory and evidence from China", *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 331-356.
- Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K. and Spiers, J. (2002), "Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 13-22.

About the authors

Dr Abhigyan Sarkar received the PhD Degree in Branding from ICFAI University Dehradun, India. He is currently working as an Assistant Professor of Marketing area at the Institute of Management Technology Ghaziabad, India (AACSB accredited). His research interests include consumer-brand relationship, brand love and brand sacralization. Articles authored by him have appeared in international journals like *Journal of Brand Management*, *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Journal of Service Theory and Practice* (forthcoming), *Society and Business Review*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *Journal of Customer Behavior*, *The Marketing Review*, *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, and *Young Consumers*. Dr Abhigyan Sarkar is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: abhigyansarkar_2003@yahoo.co.in

Dr Juhi Gahlot Sarkar is a Doctoral Student pursuing the PhD Degree in Marketing area at IBS Hyderabad (a constituent of IFHE University) in India. She received the MBA Degree from IBS Hyderabad (a constituent of IFHE University). She has work experiences with reputed IT and insurance companies. Her research interests include consumer-brand relationship, brand sacralization and hospitality management. Articles authored by her have appeared in international journals like *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, *Society and Business Review*, *Young Consumers*, *Journal of Service Theory and Practice* (forthcoming), and *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*.

Dr Sreejesh S. is an Assistant Professor of Quantitative Methods & Marketing at the School of Management Studies, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi, India. His main research interests include brand management, services marketing, online marketing & advertising. His publications have appeared in: *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Internet Research*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *British Food Journal*, *Tourism Review*, *Management Research Review*, *Young Consumers*, *Indian Journal of Business Research*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, etc. In addition to chapter contributions in books and case study developments, he has also authored books of international repute with Pearson India and Springer International.

Dr Anusree M.R. completed the graduate studies in Mathematics (secured Third Rank) from the University of Kerala. Subsequently, she completed MSc (secured First Rank), MPhil, and PhD Degrees in Statistics from the University of Kerala, Trivandrum, Kerala. Dr. Anusree received prestigious fellowships such as INSPIRE from DST, Delhi & KSCSTE fellowship. She received the Young Statistician Award of Kerala Statistical Association in 2012. She has published several research articles in international journals of repute, such as *Statistics & Probability Letters*, *Statistics*, *Communications in Statistics – Theory and Methods*, *Journal of Statistical Theory and Practice*, etc. She also authored the book *Business Research Methods: An Applied Orientation*, published by Springer International.

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com