

## **The role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction judgment**

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### **Purpose:**

We argue that the role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction judgment can change over time and also can vary in different situations. This study provides an analysis of the simultaneous role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction judgement in various situations.

### **Design/methodology/approach:**

Studies have recognized cognition and affect can influence consumer satisfaction simultaneously and dynamically. Indeed, Homburg et al (2006) proposed that the role of cognition and affect could change over time. However, little is known about the situations in which the role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction can change. Against this background, this study identifies the situations in which the impact of cognition and affect on customer satisfaction can change and provides an analysis of the simultaneous influence of cognition and affect on satisfaction judgement in these situations.

In customer satisfaction studies, cognition has been primarily studied in terms of the (dis) confirmation paradigm, which is the result of comparison between expectations and performance of the product or service. Affect has centered on consumers' experiences during purchasing and consumption of the product or service (e.g., joy, happiness, disgust). According to the information processing theories, we suggest cognition and affect can be associated with the dual information processing systems, i.e. 'rational and experiential' (e.g. Epstein, 1994; Shiv et al, 1999). Rational system is in line with the cognition- the (dis) confirmation paradigm in customer satisfaction studies. When the rational system in operation, people would use their logic, the evidence, analyzing the cause and effect and make analytical effort to process the information. Experiential system is in line with the affect focusing on feelings, emotions and affect in customer satisfaction studies. It can be further suggested that the situations in which the rational systems in operation, the cognition is also more dominant in affecting customer satisfaction. The factors, which can trigger the operation of the experiential system would also lead to the affect exerting more effect on customer satisfaction.

### **Findings:**

Our assumption is that the role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction judgment depends on which information processing system in operation. When the experiential system in operation, affect will primarily influence satisfaction judgment and when the rational system in charge, cognition will dominantly affect customer satisfaction judgment. The factors affecting the dominance rational or experiential system would also influence the role of cognition and affect in customer satisfaction judgment.

The situational factors identified include individual dispositional differences (such as Need for cognition and Faith in intuition), emotional involvement; situational variables (time, pressure, distraction, or cognitive load), repeated experiences, and motivations.

**Originality/value (mandatory)**

Our study contributes to the existing literature on customer satisfaction. In particular, this study further extends Homburg et al (2006) dynamic perspective of cognition and affect on satisfaction. We provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between cognition and affect in influencing customer satisfaction judgment.

**References:**

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Shiv, Baba and Fedorikhin (1999) Heart and Mind in Conflict: The Interplay of Affect and Cognition in Consumer Decision Making”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.26, December, 278-292