

Article

Effect of Electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-SHQ) on Pleasure, Arousal and Eudaimonic Well-Being; an Empirical Analysis

Rasheed K

Assistant Professor, Aliah University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

I N F O

E-mail Id:

rasheedk@aliah.ac.in

Orcid Id:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7037-7207>

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A B S T R A C T

The critical analysis of extant literature regarding service quality shows that though there has been sufficient literature on electronic service quality (e-SQ), the studies based on the hedonic and experiential dimensions are overlooked and limited. So this study conceptually proposes one construct called electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-SHQ) after extensive scanning of extant literature. This study develops one conceptual framework of relationships based on e-SHQ and its positive emotional outcomes like pleasure and arousal and psychological outcomes like eudaimonic well-being. The proposed model is empirically tested using field data collected from online consumers. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling techniques were applied and the result exhibited strong and positive impact of e-SHQ on its outcomes like pleasure, arousal and eudaimonic well-being.

Keywords: e-SQ, e-HSQ, Pleasure, Arousal, Eudaimonic Well-being

Introduction

E-business arenas are expanding tremendously for last few years due to the high internet penetration and smartphone accessibility among the bigger portion of Indian population. Social network applications and web platforms aggravates the rate of this expansion (Choi and Kim 2018). Online consumers perceive some sort of ambiguity, anxiety and fear while preferring online purchase over offline platform which creates further pressure on the online companies to overcome this fear and concentrate on designing more robust and efficient websites and applications which are experiential and enjoyable in nature (Shatnawi T 2019). Since all business giants are moving to the online platform, electronic Service Quality (e-SQ) has become the much engaged research area in extant literature.

Huge investments in e-SQ sector have helped to reduce the ambiguity and reluctance in the consumer promptness

towards e-service despite having the perceived risks. E-SQ has attracted the attention of academicians as well as the practitioners since internet has become the new of channel hub of product and service delivery. Numerous studies have confirmed the purchase decision of consumers is primarily based on the combination of emotional as well as the rational aspects. Studies by Fang et al. (2016) indicate that consumers shop utilitarian as well as the hedonic reasons. Consumers may shop to get the products or service delivered at their doorsteps (utilitarian reasons) as well as to compare prices and find the best deal (hedonic reasons).

Recent literature shows that the effect of emotions and affect has much importance as the utilitarian aspects. A lot of studies in socio-psychological area have emphasized that the hedonic and experiential online consumer behaviour has gained more importance rather than the goal oriented and utilitarian concept in online environment (Kim and Eastin, 2011).

Electronic Service Quality (e-SQ)

Service quality is one of the avidly researched areas in marketing literature. The concept of service quality was firstly explained in Vroom's (1964) Expectancy theory which gave rise to the theory of expectation disconfirmation by Oliver (1980). These theories were the basis of the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985). The SERVQUAL model was widely accepted in marketing literature and numerous studies were conducted based on that model. Later on there was paradigm shift from products to services and from physical platform to Internet and e-commerce which led to development of different SERVQUAL models based on service industry and internet based transactions (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra, 2001).

Since the new millennium, a number of studies concentrated on the aspect of electronic service quality (e-SQ) based on different dimensions and industries (Shatnawi, T.2019). Zeithaml et al, (2002) developed a scale for website service quality which was based on the dimensions like efficient shopping, purchasing experience and proper delivery of goods and services. Hundreds of (e-SQ) scales were developed since the new millennium as internet started to dominate the business activities and each scale was based on specific dimensions and particular industry settings. Shatnawi, T (2019) enumerates the list of scales which was developed after the new millennium which comes to around one hundred scales in quantity. Each scale was developed according the specific industry context which included both utilitarian and hedonic elements. Zeithaml (2000) identified dimensions like responsiveness, efficiency, reliability, contact and privacy as dimensions of e-SQ. Barnes and Vidgen (2002) developed another model called e-Qual or Web-Qual which contained dimensions like interaction, quality and usability. Loiacono et al. (2002) developed another scale called Web-Qual which constituted items like visual appeal, response time, perceived image, emotional appeal, consistent image etc. In 2005 the most popular and widely accepted scale E-SQUAL was developed by Parasuraman et al (2005) which included 22 items.

Electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-HSQ)

Though numerous scales were developed to measure electronic service quality, all these measures were based on only the utilitarian dimensions and aspects. Studies which considered the hedonic or experiential aspect of service quality were very limited and scarce. Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2001) stated the online shopping behaviour of the consumer is affected by both rational and emotional aspects. Kim and Eastin (2011) argued that consumers are more affected by the hedonic values like novelty, enjoyment and excitement rather than goal oriented reasons.

Electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-HSQ) is conceptualized as the measurement of service quality considering the experiential and emotional aspects of service rendering like, joyfulness, curiosity, fun, fantasy, aesthetics and playfulness (Shatnawi T. 2019). Malaquias and Hwang (2017) argued that consumers prefer hedonic elements over utilitarian elements while purchasing products. Voeth et. al. (2005) stressed the importance of experiential elements as the primary determinants of the quality of a specific service rendering. Hedonic elements make the consumers more frequent and loyal since it is connected with joyfulness and fun and it engenders positive vibes among the consumers leading to many positive outcomes (Shatnawi T 2019). Algharabat and Shatnawi (2014) argued that the hedonic values like fun and enjoyment are the primary determinant of consumer behaviours like online repurchase intention and loyalty.

Pleasure and Arousal

Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance (PAD) model was theoretically conceptualized by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Porat et al. (2007) argued that pleasure and arousal are the basic traits which affect the consumer behaviour. Pleasure is defined as the emotional continuum ranging from extreme feeling of pain to the ecstatic level of happiness and joy (Huang 2003). Arousal is defined as the emotional and psychological exaltation caused by the environment stimuli (Shatnawi, T.2019). Davis (2003) stated that the level of pleasure and arousal achieved during online purchase will act as the key predictors of post purchase behaviours like repurchase intention, recommendation and loyalty.

Eudaimonic well-being

Well-being is defined as a healthy psychological state by which a person feels inner happiness. Eudaimonic well-being is conceptualized as the optimal psychological feeling of self-improvement, expressiveness and vitality (Xie et al., 2020). It is the accomplishment of self-actualization by which consumer gains competency and autonomy. The emotional aspects derived from the online service environment like pleasure and arousal causes to create well-being in the minds of consumers.

Theoretical Grounding of the Study

This study is based on theoretical background of Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model developed by Donovan and Rossiter (1982). The hedonic cues and stimuli in online service environment create positive outcomes like pleasure and arousal which in turn causes psychological outcomes like well-being (Shatnawi T 2019). The SOR model suggests the experiential elements (e-HSQ) in the specific online service setting acts as the stimuli which causes the emotional and affective states of consumers like pleasure and arousal (organism) which determine

the outcomes like eudaimonic well-being (response). This study proposes a conceptual model which is based on the S-O-R model which states that the cues and stimuli an online consumer imbibes from the specific website or smartphone application leads to spontaneous emotional conditions (organism) like affective states of pleasure and arousal which in turn leads to the psychological impressions (response) in the minds of consumers like hedonic or eudaimonic well-being (Lin 2016).

Hypothesis Development

Based on the extant review of literature and the theoretical S-O-R paradigm proposed by Donovan and Rossiter (1982) this study proposes some hypothetical causal relationships. Though sufficient literature is available on the electronic service quality (e-SQ) aspects which basically deals with different utilitarian dimensions and aspects of e-SQ, the experiential and hedonic aspects of e-SQ is overlooked in the extant literature though many authors state that the hedonic values are more important to online consumers rather than the utilitarian and goal oriented purchase reasons.

Kim and Eastin (2011) argue that the hedonic dimensions in the online service environment significantly affect the positive emotions of consumer behaviour. The conceptualized electronic hedonic service quality (e-HSQ) by Shatnawi, T. (2019) has significant impact on the emotional outcomes pleasure and arousal.

H₁: electronic hedonic service quality (e-HSQ) is positively related to pleasure

H₂: electronic hedonic service quality (e-HSQ) is positively related to arousal

Wirtz et al. (2007) suggest that when the online environmental stimuli enhance the emotional imprints in the minds of consumers, it caused many positive outcomes like satisfaction, emotional well-being. Eudaimonic well-being is the totality of subjective mental easiness and inner vitality. So the emotional affective states like pleasure and arousal significantly impact the eudaimonic well-being of online consumers (Xie et al., 2020).

H₃: Pleasure is positively related to eudaimonic well-being

H₄: Arousal is positively related to eudaimonic well-being

Mediating Models

The S-O-R paradigm proposed by Donovan and Rossiter (1982) clearly states that the experiential and enjoyable cues (stimuli) within an online service setting will cause the spontaneous emotional outcomes like affective conditions of pleasure and arousal (organism) which will further lead to the subjective positive outcomes like satisfaction, well-being and repurchase intentions (response). So this study proposes two mediating relationships as;

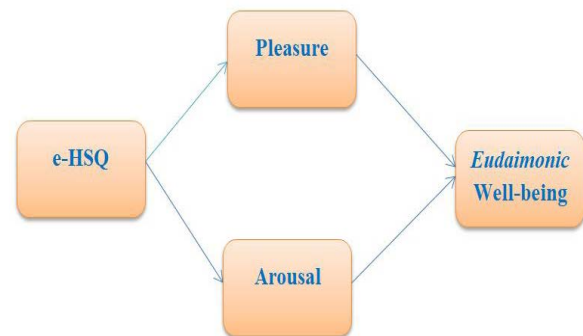
H₅: Pleasure mediates the relationship between e-HSQ and eudaimonic well-being

H₆: Arousal mediates the relationship between e-HSQ and eudaimonic well-being

Hypothesized Conceptual Framework

This study proposes one hypothesized conceptual model based on the electronic hedonic service quality (e-HSQ) and theoretically grounded on the S-O-R model proposed by Donovan and Rossiter (1982).

Research Methodology

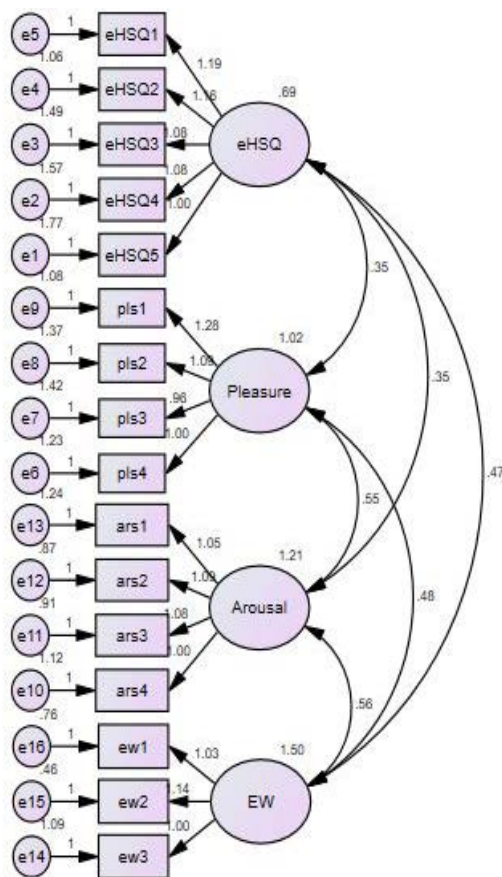


This study is descriptive in nature which proposes one conceptual model and tests it empirically using field data collected from the online consumers of different commercial websites and smartphones applications. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The non-probabilistic convenient sampling method was applied as sampling technique since random sampling technique could not be applied since the exhaustive list of online consumers was not available practically. Likert scale was the measurement tool to collect the responses. Data were collected from 556 respondents using the questionnaire. Advanced statistical techniques like Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling was used to analyse the conceptual model.

Construct Scales

The electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-HSQ) was measured using the website experiential aspects conceptualized by Shatnawi, T. (2019) which includes the dimensions like sensation, playfulness, enjoyment, entertainment, e-scape, timeliness, interactivity and emotional appeal. Few items were removed from the final measurement and structural model due to poor loadings on the factor. Pleasure and arousal were measured using the semantic differential scale developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1973, 1974) which was having six items for each. Two items were deleted from both pleasure and arousal due to high error loadings to the specific constructs. Eudaimonic well-being was measured using the scale adopted from Xie et al. (2020). The scale contained three items after omitting poor loading items for the measurement and structural model.

Measurement Model



Measurement Model Results

The measurement model or CFA model was tested and analysed using IBM Amos 23. It was found that all model fit indices were within the prescribed limits. The prime fit index CMIN/DF was found to be 1.85 (Table 1.1). Other fit indices like absolute, incremental and parsimonious fit indices (GFI=0.96, CFI=0.97, TLI=0.96, AGFI=0.94, NFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.04) were also within the threshold limit (Table 1.2) prescribed as per the recommendation of Hair et al. (2010). Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that all manifest variables were properly loading on the corresponding latent variables. The recommendations of Hair et al. (2010) were followed for the analysis and interpretation of measurement model Table 1.1.

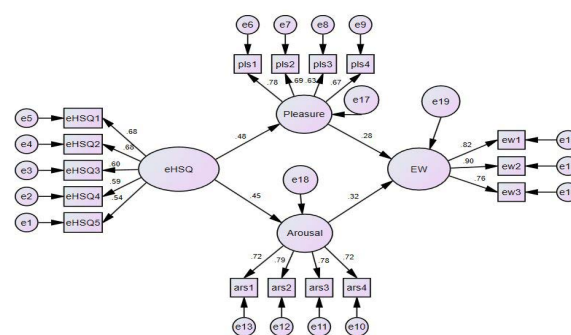
Table 1.1

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	38	181.567	98	.000	1.853
Saturated model	136	.000	0		
Independence model	16	3373.397	120	.000	28.112

Table 1.2

Fit index	Reported value
CFI	0.97
GFI	0.96
AGFI	0.94
TLI	0.96
NFI	0.94
RMSEA	0.04

Structural Model



Structural Model Results

The path model or structural model was also analyzed using Amos 23. In this model all causal paths which were based on hypothesized relationships were tested and analyzed. All structural relationships were found statistically significant. All fit indices were found within threshold limit as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). The CMIN/DF fit index was found to be 2.61 (Table 2.1) which is the best indicator of better model fit. The other absolute, incremental and parsimonious measures (Table 2.2) of model fit were also found quite above the threshold values. The conceptualized hypothesis which were formed on the basis of theoretical grounding were statistically accepted (Table 2.3).

Table 2.1

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	36	261.233	100	.000	2.612
Saturated model	136	.000	0		
Independence model	16	3373.397	120	.000	28.112

Mediation Analysis

Two mediating hypothesis were formed in conceptual model frame work. The indirect relationship between e-HSQ and EW through pleasure was tested and p value was

Table 2.1

Fit index	Reported value
CFI	0.95
GFI	0.94
AGFI	0.92
TLI	0.94
NFI	0.92
RMSEA	0.05

was tested using empirical data and all the conceptualized causal relationships were found statistically significant.

The results of this study shows that the hedonic aspects and dimensions are quite important in service marketing literature as it causes a number of emotional and psychological outcomes. The electronic hedonic service quality (e-HSQ) is one of the prime construct which maps the experiential and enjoyable aspects of consumer behaviour. This study also proved that Eudaimonic well-being is also one of the positive outcomes of e-HSQ.

Table 2.2

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Pleasure	<---	e-HSQ	.734	.096	7.611	***	H ₁ accepted
Arousal	<---	e-HSQ	.574	.080	7.203	***	H ₂ accepted
EW	<---	Arousal	.362	.056	6.468	***	H ₃ accepted
EW	<---	Pleasure	.266	.048	5.577	***	H ₄ accepted

found to be 0.009 (Table 3.1) which shows it is statistically significant. It shows that Pleasure mediates the relationship between e-HSQ and EW. Another mediating effect of arousal between e-HSQ and EW was also tested. The indirect effect was found significant as the p value was 0.011 (Table 3.2). It shows that arousal also mediates the relationship between e-HSQ and EW.

Table 3.1

Two tailed indirect significance	e-HSQ_M	Label
Pleasure_M
EW_M	.009	H ₅ accepted

Table 3.2

Two tailed indirect significance	e-HSQ_M	Label
Arousal_M
EW_M	.011	H ₆ accepted

This study contributes to the existing literature by conceptually proposing one model based on the new construct e-HSQ and empirically proving the substantial emotional and psychological outcomes like pleasure, arousal and eudaimonic well-being.

Managerial Implications

The results of the analysis give many overt and covert managerial implications for both practitioners as well as academicians. The results suggested that the online service providers should focus more on designing the websites and smartphone applications in a way that will cater the hedonic and experiential aspects of online consumer behaviour. The study suggests the online companies should emphasize more on the elements like joyfulness, fun, aesthetics, visual appeal, sensation and interactivity which fulfil the hedonic requirements of consumer behaviour. Along with giving goal oriented and utilitarian elements and reasons, a new set of experiential cues also should be considered while designing the online service platform.

Conclusion

This study tried to conceptually propose one theoretical framework based on extensive literature review on the Electronic Service Quality (e-SQ). The critical analysis of the extant literature showed that though there has been considerable academic work on e-SQ, the hedonic elements were overlooked in the dimensions of e-SQ. So this study conceptualized one construct called Electronic Hedonic Service Quality (e-HSQ). This study proposed and empirically tested one conceptual framework based on the concept of e-HSQ and its different emotional and psychological outcomes like pleasure, arousal and eudaimonic well-being. The empirical analysis proved that there is a strong positive relationship between e-HSQ and

Discussion

The extant literature shows that though there has been sufficient amount of literature in the field of electronic service quality (e-SQ) which primarily considered different dimensions and attributes according to different service context, the hedonic elements which primarily consist of enjoyable and experiential dimensions were overlooked for past few years despite having many authors advocated the importance of hedonic aspects over utilitarian reasons. This study proposed one conceptual model after scanning the extant literature. The proposed model was based on the S-O-R model and empirically tested the model using the field data collected from online consumers. The model

different emotional outcomes like pleasure and arousal which in turn cause psychological effects like eudaimonic well-being.

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