

From rags to richness : A structuration perspective on interactional richness and its impact on customer evaluations of online experiences

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Abstract

Nowadays, simply being present online is not enough anymore; companies should engage their customers in online interactions and simultaneously recognize the power customers have in creating a valuable online experience. The research in this dissertation is driven by the importance of reciprocal interactions between websites and their visitors and the attainment of both customer and company goals in terms of respectively creating a valuable online experience for customers and ultimately creating customer loyalty towards the website. The success of companies' online presence depends on their online interaction process with their customers. Therefore, this dissertation aims at contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal interaction process between website and their visitors by applying structuration theory of the sociologist Giddens (1984) in an online context. This central research problem is addressed in three-interrelated studies. One important contribution of our research is the introduction and development of a conceptualization of interactional richness that draws a distinction between media and information richness as an important driver of online customer value and loyalty. In addition, our empirical findings clearly demonstrate the indispensable role of visitors' characteristics such as reflexivity, competence and (non)-purposeful behavior on their value perceptions.