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AS A MATTER OF CONVENIENCE?

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Nowadays, due to time and location constraint factors, consumers are looking for faster, more efficient and more convenient services. Consumer convenience has always been associated to saving time and effort in getting all necessary information, products and services, preferably all in one go. Consumers are looking for more efficient ways to perform their daily routines and therefore, convenience has become an essential consideration. In offering convenient services to the consumers, most companies whether in the product or service industries are riding on online technology to provide instant and round-the-clock accessibility and ease. Online technology provides convenience in terms of much easier and faster access to information, entertainment, networking as well as purchasing. Some examples of online service and product providers are the banking, food & beverages (F&B), apparel, cosmetic and book industries.

Consumers are always looking and favouring the services having more convenience features. Companies should always explore the convenience aspect to improve consumers perceptions towards the providers (Paulo Duarte, Susana Costa e Silva, & Ferreira, 2018). A study by Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) has indicated that convenience dimensions include offerings during shopping, flexibility, easiness and shopping at own pace. Next, a research on the banking industry has observed that consumers will gain more benefits if the industry is providing convenience and accessible location because it is easier for them to do business with the banks (Catherine Tan Yein Ping, Norazah Mohd Suki, & Norbayah Mohd Suki, 2012). It is supported by McDaniel, Lamb, and Hair (2008) that the main factor that impact the choice of a service provider is convenience.

Does convenience really matter? Rowley (2005) remarked that consumers who are seeking for convenient services and offering will have an effect on their number of visits and purchases to the store as well as an effect on their brand preferences. Furthermore, convenience has been proven to have an impact on one of the imperative factors which is consumer loyalty. Consumer loyalty has been scaled down into four phases which comprise of cognitive loyalty,

affective loyalty, conative loyalty and action loyalty (Oliver, 2009). These four phases are distinct from one another in term of their elaboration but could be linked as a chain in order to create the final behaviour which is the action loyalty. Firstly, cognitive loyalty develops the brand preferences which may be collected from prior knowledge and experience. Subsequently in the second phase, affection such as favourable and liking will develop. The effect may be due to satisfaction in previous usage or purchase. Next, the conative loyalty creates commitment and motivation towards the product, brand or service. And, the final stage called action loyalty which is the act of buying and repeat purchasing.

Based on the above, convenience does matter to consumers mostly because of time and place limitations. And, companies also gain advantage in term of customer loyalty. Nevertheless, some users are still reluctant to search or do purchases online mostly due to privacy and security issues. The privacy aspect includes whether the providers are demonstrating their integrity in safeguarding and respecting users' personal data. Whereas, the security is about safety and confidentiality of the technical aspect of the service, notably the online services. Companies, whether brick-and-mortar as well as online companies, should look into these matters to promote convenience and peace of mind to their customers and finally gain consumer loyalty.

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