

How Mindful Consumption influences the Relationship Between Suppliers' Offerings and Customer Experience in Business-to-Business Contexts

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Introduction

While the concept of mindful consumption has been increasingly recognised as a critical influencer of customer behaviour and experience in the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) (Thi, 2021), its exploration within the Business-to-Business (B2B) domain remains notably under-researched (Iannacci, Fearon and Pole 2021). This oversight is particularly striking given the substantial volume and significance of B2B transactions. The paucity of research in this area could be attributed to the inherent complexity of the B2B market, which is characterized by multifaceted decision-making processes involving numerous stakeholders (Sheth and Uslay, 2023).

B2B purchasing decisions, often intricate and involving a myriad of considerations, present a unique environment where mindful consumption could have a profound impact. The influence of mindful consumption on these complex decision-making processes could lead to more deliberate, sustainability-focused choices (Gupta & Sheth, 2023), impacting aspects ranging from supplier selection to the appraisal of products and services (Sheth and Uslay, 2023). However, this potential influence is not without its nuances. In an increasingly sustainability-conscious marketplace, the alignment of B2B companies with mindful consumption practices could indeed enhance their brand reputation. Nevertheless, the translation of this enhanced reputation into improved customer experience and the fostering of stronger relationships and loyalty requires a more critical examination (Abuazzah, 2022).

This research aims to dissect the nuanced role of mindful consumption in the intricate interplay between suppliers' offerings and customer experience within B2B contexts. The primary goal is to critically address the existing gap in literature by scrutinizing how mindful consumption might shape both the offerings of B2B suppliers and the ensuing customer experience.

The objectives of this study are twofold. First, it seeks to conceptualise and operationalize the construct of mindful consumption specifically within the B2B sphere. Second, it endeavours to critically analyse the extent to which mindful consumption influences the relationship between supplier offerings and customer experience. By fulfilling these objectives, this research aspires to make a substantial contribution to the discourse surrounding customer experience management in B2B settings (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; McColl-Kennedy 2019; Gounaris and Almoraish 2024).

Relevant background information

The concept of mindful consumption, initially prevalent in the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) context (Milne et al. 2020), has gradually emerged as a vital consideration in the Business-to-Business (B2B) sector (Abuazzah, 2022). In the B2C domain, mindful consumption is often linked with sustainable and ethical purchasing behaviors, significantly impacting customer experience and brand loyalty (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2023). This shift towards mindfulness reflects a growing consumer consciousness about the environmental and social ramifications of their purchasing choices (Gupta and Sheth, 2023).

However, the translation of mindful consumption principles into the B2B context presents unique challenges and opportunities (Ndubisi and Natarajan, 2016). Unlike B2C transactions, B2B interactions involve complex decision-making processes, often with multiple stakeholders (Sheth and Uslay, 2023). This complexity adds layers to the understanding of mindful consumption in B2B settings. The importance of considering these complexities, suggesting that mindful consumption in B2B could lead to more sustainable and ethical supply chain decisions (Benos et al., 2022).

Despite its relevance, the exploration of mindful consumption within B2B contexts remains surprisingly sparse. This gap in research is due to the inherently different nature of B2B transactions, which are characterized by longer sales cycles, higher transaction values, and a focus on relationships rather than individual transactions (Ndubisi and Natarajan, 2016). The sustainability and ethical dimensions of B2B transactions are critical yet underexplored areas (Huang et al., 2022).

Recent research shows that mindfulness impacts the customer experience and this impact increases with how long the customer interacts with the business (Ben Haobin et al., 2021). Such effects of mindfulness on customer experience even help in recovery during service failure (Martinez et al., 2023). On one hand, B2B customers are mindful of the relevant metrics that B2B marketers use (Hochstein et al., 2023) while on the other hand, mindfulness helps B2B salespeople in improving customer experience by reducing their anxiety, increasing their resilience, and collaborating with customers (Hartmann and Lussier, 2020).

In summary, while the concept of mindful consumption is well-established in the B2C sector, its application and impact in the B2B realm necessitate further investigation. This literature review highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how mindful consumption can shape customer experiences and decision-making processes in B2B contexts.

Research approach

Our research employs review of literature for analysing the relationship of mindful consumption and customer experience in B2B context. This will help us to develop a conceptual model that we may refine with a qualitative study involving B2B customers based in Cardiff and other major cities in UK.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to allow for in-depth exploration of participants' views on mindful consumption and its impact on their experiences with suppliers.

Aimed to ensure depth and variety in the data, around 30-40 participants will be selected. This size is conducive to qualitative research, allowing for comprehensive analysis while ensuring a manageable volume of data.

The study will focus on the UK B2B market, a setting characterised by its diverse industries, substantial economic impact, and sophisticated business processes. The UK B2B sector is known for its

competitive environment and increasing emphasis on sustainability and ethical business practices, making it an ideal context for this research.

The target sample will consist of business customers from various industries within the UK, including manufacturing, technology, and services, to ensure a broad representation of the B2B market. The participants will be individuals involved in the consumption process.

This approach will provide insights into the extent and nature of the impact that mindful consumption has within the B2B context.

Conclusions

This research aims to elucidate the role of mindful consumption in influencing the relationship between suppliers' offerings and customer experience in Business-to-Business (B2B) settings, particularly focusing on the UK market. Given the increasing emphasis on sustainability and ethical business practices, the study seeks to explore how B2B customers' mindful consumption behaviours influence their perception and evaluation of suppliers' offerings and, in turn, shape their overall customer experience. The methodology of this research pivots to a qualitative approach, centering on in-depth interviews conducted with participants from a range of industries across the UK.

Potential Contribution

1. **Theoretical Contribution:** This research is poised to make a significant contribution to the theoretical understanding of customer experience in B2B markets. By integrating the concept of mindful consumption—a topic predominantly explored in B2C contexts—into B2B settings, the study bridges a crucial gap in existing literature.
2. **Practical Implications for B2B Marketers and Suppliers:** The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for B2B marketers and suppliers. Understanding how mindful consumption affects customer perceptions and experiences can help businesses tailor their offerings more effectively, emphasizing sustainability and ethical practices that resonate with modern business values.
3. **Guidance for Strategic Decision-Making:** The study's results can inform strategic decision-making in B2B companies. By highlighting the importance of mindful consumption in shaping customer experiences, businesses can make more informed choices about product development, marketing strategies, and supply chain management, aligning these elements with the evolving preferences of their customers.

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