Does the Effect of Customer Experience on Customer Satisfaction Create a Sustainable Competitive Advantage? A Comparative Study of Different Shopping Situations

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Abstract: With the rapid development of online shopping and traditional physical store shopping interweaving to form different shopping situations, customer experience has gradually become the main source of retailers’ sustainable competitive advantage through differentiation. Retailers need to continuously improve customer experience in different shopping situations to maintain long-term sustainable customer satisfaction and achieve sustainability. The study aims to examine what kind of shopping situations will influence customer experience and customer satisfaction. A total of 288 questionnaires were collected from two different shopping situations (146 questionnaires from physical stores were collected in five cities in China and 142 online questionnaires were collected from 21 provinces in China), and multiple regression analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses. As a result, we found that customer experience with staff service, shopping environment, and shopping procedure has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Different shopping situations significantly moderate the relationships among customer experience with the shopping environment, product experience, and customer satisfaction but rarely influence customer experience with staff service and service procedures. Finally, gender significantly moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in different shopping situations. This study theoretically reveals the relationship between customer experience and satisfaction in different shopping situations and provides practical suggestions for retailers to form differentiated sustainable competitive advantage through customer experience management.

Keywords: customer experience; customer satisfaction; shopping situation; online shopping; physical store shopping; sustainable competitive advantage

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of online shopping and traditional physical store shopping interweaving to form different shopping situations [1], customer experience has gradually become the main source of retailers’ sustainable competitive advantage through differentiation [2]. For example, according to iMedia Research, the amount of global retail sales in 2018 totaled USD 24.86 trillion, of which e-commerce reached USD 284 million, accounting for 11.4% of the total. In addition, according
to the National Bureau of Statistics, China’s retail sales of social consumer goods reached USD 41.1649 trillion in 2019 with USD 10.6324 trillion being online retail sales, corresponding to 25.8% of the total sales of social consumer goods. In the context of the coexistence of online shopping and physical store shopping, especially in the context of online shopping, the application of new technologies (such as the internet, big data, artificial intelligence, etc.) will produce unique and differentiated customer experiences. Retailers need to pay attention to the changes and differences of customer experience to better improve customer satisfaction so as to obtain a sustainable long-term competitive advantage [3].

Recent literature conducts a theoretical analysis of the framework of online customer experience and customer experience management in the era of big data [2,3]. It is believed that customer experience in the online shopping context can help retailers win customer satisfaction through the differentiation strategy so as to obtain a competitive advantage and sustainability [4], but there is a lack of sufficient empirical research. The traditional empirical research on the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction is mainly based on individual physical stores or online context; and the existing research on the integration of online and physical store context is mainly based on the theoretical research of literature review. For example, Otto, Szymanski and Varadarajan [5], based on the theory of customer-delivered-value, believe that customer satisfaction is mainly affected by six factors: service value, personnel value, product value, image value, currency, and non-currency cost. Soderlund and Sagfossen [6] examined the impact of supplier effort and the consumer’s own effort on customer satisfaction in the context of experiments. From the perspective of e-commerce, Levy and Gvili [7] have held that the service, product, and value have a marked influence on customer satisfaction while information collection and security scarcely influence the satisfaction of mobile e-commerce customers. Nevertheless, in the context of different shopping situations, existing studies either concentrate on the analysis of factors that affect customer satisfaction in a single situation, or general factors. They do not pay attention to the differences of factors in various shopping situations or to further revealing the distinctiveness of the convergence and mutuality of online and physical store retail. Consequently, the present study will integrate different shopping situations and discuss the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in a comprehensive and dialectic way.

Moreover, gender is another important factor in different shopping situations. As men and women exhibit different preferences for shopping situations, they will behave differently while shopping, even in the same situation. The explanation is that women, having the two hemispheres of their brains being more interconnected, tend to be more holistic and comprehensive in information processing while men’s brain exhibits more specialization, with stronger lateralization [8]. Consequently, we want to better examine the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in the context of different shopping situations. We selected typical online and physical store clothes selling enterprises as subjects in this study and we introduced the factor of shopping situations to clarify the relationship between online and physical store shopping situations. Furthermore, we introduced the variable of gender to discuss its influence on the relationship.

2. Theoretical Basis and the Proposal of Research Hypothesis

2.1. Theoretical Analysis of the Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction

2.1.1. Customer Experience

Different scholars have defined customer experience based on different perspectives. Hult et al. [9] held that customer experience is an internal and subjective reaction in the process of direct and indirect contact between a customer and an enterprise, including manifold aspects of service quality provided by the company, such as the advertising, packaging, function, user-friendliness, and reliability of the product and the reliability of service. Sebald and Jacob [10] held that customer experience stems from consumers’ feelings of different levels, including rationale, emotion, psychology, and mentality. Otterbring and Lu [1] maintained that customer experience involves all contact points
That are inherently integrated from the initial research of products to the ensuing consumption. In this study, we investigated customer experience from a retail perspective and classified customer experience into four categories based on the literature: product experience, experience with the service procedure, experience with the shopping environment, and experience with staff service. The specific analysis and summarization of relevant studies is presented in Table 1.

| Dimension                     | Representative Literatures                                                                 | Main Components                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product experience            | Park et al. [11]; Krystallis and Chrysochou [12]; Oliver et al. [13]; Zarantenello and Schmitt [14] | Product design, label, package, information delivery, environment, shape, sign, mascot, and product characteristics |
| Experience with service       | Šerić et al. [15]                                                                              | Service delivery based on the quality of product, service, and experience        |
| procedure                     | Chebat and Michon [16]; Wu et al. [17]; Ying et al. [18]                                      | Product display, scent, lighting, music, a pleasant mood, and environment        |
| Experience with shopping      | Young et al. [19]; Dabholkar and Abston [20]                                                  | All contact with staff/authentic moments and tangible and intangible service factors |
| environment                   |                                                                                             |                                                                                  |
| Experience with staff service |                                                                                             |                                                                                  |

2.1.2. Customer Satisfaction

A consensus has been reached that customer satisfaction stands for the response to an emotion. Ganesan [21] has indicated that satisfaction, derived from previous experience and then constituting an attitude, is a positive emotional response to the result of a previous experience. Bae et al. [22] have shared the idea that satisfaction is an emotional response to purchasing. Orel and Kara [23], focusing on the services industry, have held that customer satisfaction describes the desired result of a service experience, including the assessment of whether the service has satisfied customers’ demands and expectations. Park et al. [11] have maintained that customer satisfaction is an important way for enterprises to establish a long-term relationship with consumers and only a few enterprises have succeeded without such a stable relationship. Krystallis and Chrysochou [12] have considered customer satisfaction a decisive factor influencing the assessment of an enterprise after the purchase of tangible and intangible brand properties as well as customer loyalty. In summary, the study concludes that customer satisfaction represents a subjective emotional response toward purchasing, retail, or the action of purchasing and acquisition and an assessment criterion for customer experience used to compare the desired product properties with the real ones.

2.1.3. Customer Experience, Customer Satisfaction, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Sustainable competitive advantage is one of the important goals of an organization. Past scholars have deepened the concept of sustainable competitive advantage from two perspectives [24]. In the first, research on the source and feature of competitive advantage: past scholars believe that competitive advantage comes from the value creation and distribution process of an organization. Therefore, enterprises need to integrate internal and external resources to reflect the organization’s competitive advantages form rare, non-imitative, valuable, and irreplaceable resources or capabilities in the process of production and marketing [25]. Second, the concern and deepening of sustainability: past scholars developed the concept of sustainability from the perspective of the long-term development of organizations. They defined sustainability as the situation in which organizations can maintain long-term and unrepeatable market advantages (or benefits) compared with current or potential competitors [26]. Therefore, we define sustainable competitive advantage in this research as the rare, valuable, non-imitative, and irreplaceable long-term market advantages (or benefits) formed by resource integration in the process of value creation and distribution compared with present or potential competitors.
In the retail industry, high competition, high customer requirements, and complex technology is the current market status. Customer experience has become an important factor for retailers to implement differentiated strategies and obtain sustainable competitive advantage [27]. Customers live in an experience economy situation; enterprises’ competitive advantages will come from creating an experience based on products or services to attract customers [3]. Furthermore, customer experience has become an important part of the value creation process of retailers. In the shopping process, actively guiding and creating a positive emotional experience, can obtain excellent customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It is the way to acquire a sustainable competitive advantage [28]. Especially in the current situation where physical stores and online shopping are coexisting, retailers can create their own niche markets to attract customers and ensure sustainable competitive advantages by integrating these two marketing channels [27].

At the same time, customer satisfaction is the core indicator of retailers’ successful and long-term sustainable competitiveness. Artusi, Bellini, Dell’Era, and Verganti [27] indicated that customer satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with the indicators of success and long-term sustainable competitive advantage of retail enterprises, such as sales volume, profit, consumers’ repurchase intention, market share, and word-of-mouth. Notably, customer experience is the most critical determinant of customer satisfaction. It is the most important path and practice for retail companies to differentiate from present and potential competitors in the current market environment. It is an important aspect that affects customer satisfaction [29]. Therefore, this research studies the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction, and its influencing factors (such as different shopping situations, gender, etc.) to analyze how retailers can improve customer satisfaction through customer experience and create a sustainable competitive advantage.

2.1.4. Customer Experience with Product Experience and Customer Satisfaction

As regards the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in retail, Oliver et al. [13] indicated that incentives and positive emotions delight customers and can form part of customer satisfaction. Zarantenello and Schmitt [14] held that product experience can boost customer satisfaction, attention to the product, and brand reliability. Šerić et al. [15] claimed that product experience, rather than the concept of an emotional relationship, is probably the result of an emotional connection while emotion is a result of an internal stimulus. In the meantime, they shared the belief that customer satisfaction is a manifestation of emotions that can be positive or negative, and short-term or long-term. The study concludes that product experience, more than simple cognitive behavior, is an analytical and converging mental experience of a higher level in nature. It will result in brand evaluation as an important basis of brand attitude and repetitive purchase behavior of customers. Hence, we propose the H1:

**Hypothesis (H1).** Customer experience with product experience during shopping has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

2.1.5. Customer Experience with Staff Service and Customer Satisfaction

In the context of retail, Judd [30] indicated that staff members are obliged to create value for and deliver quality service to customers. Wu et al. [17] held that service quality affects customer satisfaction through various factors. Ying et al. [18] stated that service quality is a critical driver affecting customer satisfaction. The staff, in customers’ eyes, represent the enterprises they serve, as well as the products or services provided. Young et al. [19] stated that many enterprises rely on their staff to design and deliver services or products. Dabholkar and Abston [20] proposed that customers’ service satisfaction improves their willingness for repetitive purchases. Additionally, Weatherly and Tansik [31] held that as retailers often face a contradiction between their organization’s demands and customer needs, they have to coordinate the conflicting relationships among organizations, direct service providers (staff), and customers. The right of control enterprises grant to their staff is connected to the right of
control the staff grants to customers. When staff members’ demand for control is met, they also grant customers the right of control. On the contrary, when staff fails to have a certain degree of the right of control, they will take some bureaucratic measures to obtain it. Consequently, this will simultaneously diminish or even disregard the consumers’ right of control [31,32], thus reducing customer satisfaction. Therefore, we propose the H2:

**Hypothesis (H2).** Customer experience with staff service during shopping has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

### 2.1.6. Customer Experience with Shopping Environment and Customer Satisfaction

In the context of retail, Chebat and Michon [16] found that shoppers’ perception of the shopping environment stimulates and affects their emotions. Physical stores can affect customers’ willingness to purchase by influencing their selection of stores to visit. Prior to selection, customers’ first impression of a shop directly impacts their emotions. Shoppers with a better mood before shopping will perceive the product they see more positively and eventually tend to close a deal [33]. Furthermore, Wright, Newman, and Dennis [34] claimed that the perception of a pleasant shopping experience in a shopping mall enables shoppers to spend more time and money while shopping. As indicated by Dennis et al. [35], designing the atmosphere of a shopping mall enhances sales and increases customer expenditure. In summary, a good experience with the shopping environment provides additional value to products or services in the environment and boosts customer experience and customer satisfaction. Hence, we propose the H3:

**Hypothesis (H3).** Customer experience with the shopping environment while shopping has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

### 2.1.7. Customer Experience with Shopping Procedure and Customer Satisfaction

The shopping procedure must meet customer satisfaction as much as possible in terms of its capability and efficiency, and the efficiency of its operation determines a store’s competitiveness [27]. The design of the shopping procedure and quality of management influence the service quality delivered as well as the performance of a store. The purpose of optimizing customer experience with the shopping procedure is to better satisfy the needs of customers. Poor efficiency of the business procedures while shopping leads to a less positive customer experience and customer dissatisfaction [24]. Hence, we propose the H4:

**Hypothesis (H4).** Customer experience with the shopping procedure has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

### 2.2. Theoretical Analysis of the Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction in Different Shopping Situations

#### 2.2.1. Influence of Different Shopping Situations on the Relationship between Customer Experience with Product Experience and Customer Satisfaction

During online shopping, customers have a certain range of expectations regarding the products they are about to select. When they receive the product, they will be satisfied if it lies within the acceptance range of their expectations [3]. Once the product surpasses the acceptance range of their expectations, their satisfaction is boosted; on the contrary, if the product falls below the customers’ minimum tolerance in terms of expectations, customer satisfaction is reduced. It is a matter of the range of customer expectations.

During physical store shopping, while selecting products, consumers need to face the objects to be selected and make the final decision after observing, trying out, and comparing with other products. They will accept the suggestions or recommendations of salespeople actively or passively if necessary.
Since this type of shopping takes place in physical stores, consumers have higher requirements for the shopping procedure as their decision is made after they have observed and inspected the products, and after they have confirmed the appearance, performance, and other product details by themselves. In physical store shopping, since no aspect of the product is left to customers' imagination, customers exhibit lower tolerance and acceptance levels compared to online shopping. It is more of a matter of threshold [27]. In this situation, we propose the H5:

**Hypothesis (H5).** Different shopping situations significantly moderate the relationship between product experience and customer satisfaction. Product experience has a positive influence on customer satisfaction in the case of physical store shopping.

2.2.2. Influence of Different Shopping Situations on the Relationship between Customer Experience with Shopping Environment and Customer Satisfaction

Compared with consumers' attitudes toward products, the shopping environment plays a larger role in their decision of which shops they should visit [36]. Some researchers have maintained that store shopping affects the customers' expectations and perceptions, and their satisfaction in the end [37]. Chebat and Michon [16] have argued that the customers' perception of the shopping environment affects, to a large extent, shoppers' excitement and mood. Furthermore, Wright, Newman, and Dennis [34] have shown that when the customers' perception of a shopping environment is pleasant and positive, they tend to spend more time and money there. Consequently, the design of the ambiance in physical stores will create more positive emotions and improve satisfaction. In online shopping, environment experience refers to website design and product display, with which consumers have direct contact. The former entails the user-friendliness of the layout, the acceptability of the audio and animated content, and the convenience of the links, while the latter influences the customers' experience both in online and physical store shopping [38]. Effective product display can not only attract consumers to browse shopping websites and increase clicks on websites but also urges consumers to make a purchase decision even without a direct product experience as in physical stores. Hence, we propose the H6:

**Hypothesis (H6).** Different shopping situations significantly moderate the relationship between customer experience with the shopping environment and customer satisfaction. Environment experience has a more positive influence on customer satisfaction in the case of physical store shopping.

2.2.3. Influence of Different Shopping Situations on the Relationship between Customer Experience with Staff Service and Customer Satisfaction

In online shopping, staff services with which customers come in contact include 3 stages: pre-sales, mid-sales, and after-sales services. In the meantime, online staff members, due to the considerable time they spend on online consultations, find it hard to take the initiative to ask questions of consumers browsing the webpage. Based on the concept of staff service, consumers play the active role and the staff takes the role of problem-resolving, helping consumers acquire information before purchasing, and deals with technical problems and the after-sales problems of product returns and exchanges. Nevertheless, staff service, due to the nature of online shopping, is all done online, and consumers can only know whether the problem is solved and perceive the service received. In the case of store shopping, however, they have higher requirements for staff service and make decisions based on both the service result and whether the image of a store and its staff match their expectations [39,40]. As soon as they enter a store, consumers will start to observe the staff that approaches them in terms of their dress, presentation, and facial expressions. Many personal and subjective factors influence consumers' judgments, including similarity, value, and beliefs, which influence consumers' attitudes and behavior [41]. Accordingly, in terms of staff service concerning products and demands of functionality, the behavior and body and language of staff also have different influences on different
customers, which to a large extent; depends on their personality and experience, requiring more flexibility from staff. Therefore, we propose the H7:

**Hypothesis (H7).** Different shopping situations moderate the relationship between customer experience with staff service and customer satisfaction. Customer experience with staff service has a more positive influence on customer satisfaction in the case of physical store shopping.

2.2.4. Influence of Different Shopping Situations on the Relationship between Customer Experience with the Shopping Procedure and Customer Satisfaction

The online shopping procedure can be summarized into three steps: collecting and balancing information; accomplishing the transaction; and logistics, transportation, and goods receiving. In the information collection step, consumers find it easy to access information from across the world with the help of the internet [42,43]. In the process of accomplishing the transaction, consumers consider price and safety as priorities. They can purchase products online at a lower price due to the vendors’ cost savings in terms of shop rents, maintenance expenses, and daily expenditures. The most disconcerting thing for consumers is transaction security. Koyuncu and Bhattacharya [44] indicated that the risk of online payment is one of the reasons that consumers hesitate to shop online. Furthermore, consumers need to wait for the delivery of goods unless the products they purchase are delivered online (software, music, e-books, etc.) or are service products (online consulting, etc.). In addition, to have a product delivered, they have to arrange for the time of delivery and make additional planning if products need to be exchanged or returned. If there is any problem at one step of the entire procedure, customer experience is affected.

On the other hand, the shopping procedure at a store is based on the customers’ purpose of visiting the store. They may simply wish to buy a certain product, entertain themselves, or boost their self-esteem. As a result, this is different from simply visiting a shop for buying clothes or daily necessities, and it is not simply observing, trying items out, comparing, making decisions, and then paying at the register. Store shopping, due to its different potential purposes, adds many uncertainties to the shopping procedure. As a result, it is more challenging to achieve customer satisfaction when this procedure is complicated. Hence, we propose the H8:

**Hypothesis (H8).** Different shopping situations significantly moderate the relationship between customer experience with the shopping procedure and customer satisfaction. Customer experience with the shopping procedure will have a more positive influence on customer satisfaction in the case of physical store shopping.

2.3. Theoretical Analysis of the Influence of Gender on the Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction

2.3.1. The Influence of Gender on the Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction

As indicated by a theory in sociology, in their social life, individuals gradually behave according to the moderation of their own gender roles. From the perspective of consumer characteristics, as gender represents a critical basis of market segmentation, consumers of different genders differ in their shopping demand, risk identification, information processing, and so on. For example, men process information based on specific signs, while women process it based on their relationships. Specifically, men shop to satisfy their demands and are directly affected by information to which they pay attention, whereas women are more easily affected by the direction of mutual relationships and thus make purchasing decisions based on the information in which they are interested [45]. To achieve customer satisfaction of a certain level, retailers need to put more effort when considering women’s subjective judgments. Therefore, we propose the H9:
Hypothesis (H9). Gender significantly moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. Women are more sensitive to customer experience than men in their determination of customer satisfaction.

2.3.2. The Influence of Gender on the Relationship between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction in Different Shopping Situations

In different shopping situations, the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction differs greatly between men and women. By analyzing feedback from 227 interviewees, Rodgers and Harris [46] indicated that customer satisfaction based on the main factors including the emotional reward of perception, trust, and functionality, and have shown that female consumers find it harder to achieve emotional satisfaction and are less content with online shopping. Compared to men, they tend to exhibit more doubt than trust in online shopping. In contrast, male consumers believe that online shopping is more functional and convenient. Female consumers are also more likely to exhibit compulsive shopping than their counterparts while store shopping. Comegys, Hannula, and Väisänen [47] have indicated that men tend to recognize the convenience of store shopping and that women can perceive larger risks underlying online shopping. Lou and Xie [48] have suggested that gender can influence the way men and women receive and process online information. Women are believed to enjoy themselves less and be less satisfied than men during online shopping due to emotional reasons. Hence, we propose the H10:

Hypothesis (H10). Gender significantly moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in different shopping situations. Women are more sensitive to customer experience in different shopping situations compared to men in their determination of customer satisfaction.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical model of the study based on the hypotheses.
3. Research Method and Data Survey

Prudent questionnaire design is a prerequisite for collecting data of good quality. For this study, data were collected through questionnaires, mainly online ones. Based on the purpose and topic of this study, the questionnaire primarily targeted individuals aged between 18 and 55 who had bought clothes from both the internet and physical stores. To obtain better indicators of customer experience in online and store shopping, this study separates the study of online shopping from that of store shopping and devises separate questionnaires on the online and physical store selling of clothes in an effort to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of each. A total of 150 completed questionnaires of each situation were collected, including 12 invalid questionnaires. Finally, 288 valid questionnaires were used, representing 96% of the total number of collected questionnaires.

3.1. Measurement

3.1.1. Personal Information

As the study focused on customer experience with clothes selling in physical stores and online stores, the basic information section of the questionnaire was designed to obtain the research subjects’ gender, age, education background, profession, and monthly average income.

3.1.2. Customer Experience of Physical Store

We designed this scale following the concept of service quality. Service quality was initially defined as the difference between customers’ expectations and customers’ overall assessment of the service experience [49]. The concept has led to managerial practices aiming to exceed customers’ expectations. Considering the scale for service quality and the special situation of clothes selling at physical stores, this study created the scale after correcting relevant scales, and each item was measured by the Likert 5 scale. There are four dimensions: shopping environment, staff service, shopping procedure, and product experience, and a total of 14 items. Details about the scale are shown in Table 2.

| Dimension                      | Item                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Experience with shopping environment | 1. Proper and attractive arrangement of the shop                     |
|                                 | 2. Complete service facilities                                      |
|                                 | 3. Guidance of service staff throughout the shopping                |
|                                 | 4. Good service attitude                                            |
| Experience with staff service    | 5. Proficiency in business                                          |
|                                 | 6. Frequent communication with customers                            |
|                                 | 7. A simple and fast shopping procedure                            |
| Experience with shopping procedure | 8. Experience of touching and trying the clothes on                   |
|                                 | 9. Comprehensive and reliable after-sales service                   |
|                                 | 10. Variety of categories and colors                               |
|                                 | 11. Guarantee of product quality                                   |
| Product experience              | 12. Fast preparing and packaging of goods                           |
|                                 | 13. Green and environmentally friendly product                     |
|                                 | 14. Brand popularity                                               |

3.1.3. Customer Experience of Online Shops

On the other hand, based on the scale for customer service at physical stores, a scale was designed for customer experience with clothes selling activities at online shops. Corrections were made due to the distinctiveness of the online shopping procedure. There are 14 items [49] measured by the Likert 5 scale. The scale is shown in Table 3.
Table 3. The scale of customer experience in online shopping.

| Dimension                      | Item                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Experience with shopping       | 1. Neat and attractive web design                                    |
| environment                    | 2. Easiness of online shopping                                       |
|                                | 3. Guidance throughout the process                                   |
|                                | 4. Good attitude                                                     |
| Experience with staff service  | 5. Business proficiency                                              |
|                                | 6. Frequent communication with the customer and good service attitude|
|                                | 7. Simple and fast procedure for online shopping                     |
| Experience with shopping       | 8. Availability of pictures and reviews at all times                  |
| procedure                      | 9. Reliable and comprehensive after-sales service                    |
| Product experience             | 10. Variety of categories and colors                                 |
|                                | 11. Guarantee of product quality                                     |
|                                | 12. Fast delivery                                                    |
|                                | 13. Green and environmentally friendly product                       |
|                                | 14. Brand popularity                                                 |

3.1.4. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a comprehensive assessment of satisfaction with the experience during the entire process of buying clothes. Based on the prior studies [11,12,21–23], the same items were used for the measurement of customer satisfaction at online and physical stores. Furthermore, five items are included to measure with in the Likert 5 scale, in light of the specific situation of clothes selling. The scale is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The scale of customer satisfaction.

| Dimension       | Item                                                                 |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Customer        | 1. I am very satisfied with the service during shopping              |
| satisfaction     | 2. I am very satisfied with the products during shopping             |
|                  | 3. I am very satisfied with the speed of delivery after shopping     |
|                  | 4. I am very satisfied with the shopping environment                 |
|                  | 5. I will buy the same kind of product again                         |

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

The participants were from China. However, the collection of online questionnaires mainly reflected the geographical characteristics of the respondents through their IP addresses. There were a total of 150 online questionnaires distributed and recovered, and 142 valid questionnaires were obtained. The results showed that the IP addresses of the respondents came from the Anhui Province (2), Beijing (21), Fujian Province (27), Guangdong Province (7), Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (2), Hebei Province (30), Henan Province (6), Heilongjiang Province (1), Hunan Province (10), Jilin Province (1), Jiangsu Province (3), Jiangxi Province (3), LiaoNing Province (1), Inner Mongolia (1), Shandong Province (10), Shanxi Province (5), Shaanxi Province (1), Shanghai City (4), Yunnan Province (3), Zhejiang Province (4) and Chongqing (1). According to the level of economic development, geographical location, and convenience of investigation, Shenzhen city of Guangdong Province and Quanzhou City of Fujian Province in East China, Changsha City of Hunan Province in Central China, Beijing city and Shijiazhuang city of Hebei Province in North China were selected and distributed to. Each city was surveyed with 30 offline questionnaires in a shopping mall. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, and 146 valid questionnaires were recovered. The descriptive statistical information of the respondents is shown in Table 5. After sorting and analyzing data using SPSS, we obtained descriptive statistics for the variables on personal characteristics including gender, age, education background, profession, income, and many others to analyze the structure of the sample. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the personal information variables.
Table 5. Descriptive statistics of participants.

| Variable          | Category             | Absolute Frequency | Relative Frequency (%) |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Gender            | Male                 | 47                 | 28.47                  |
|                   | Female               | 95                 | 71.53                  |
|                   | **Total**            | **82**             | **28.47**              |
| Age               | 18~25                | 71                 | 46.18                  |
|                   | 26~35                | 36                 | 28.13                  |
|                   | 36~45                | 25                 | 19.79                  |
|                   | Over 55              | 1                  | 1.39                   |
|                   | **Total**            | **133**            | **46.18**              |
| Education background | Below highschool-educated | 0                 | 0                      |
|                   | Highschool-educated  | 2                  | 1.39                   |
|                   | Higher education     | 22                 | 13.19                  |
|                   | Undergraduate education | 113               | 81.25                  |
|                   | Post-graduate education | 5                | 4.17                   |
|                   | **Total**            | **131**            | **81.25**              |
| Average monthly income | 0~2000          | 48                 | 35.07                  |
|                   | 2000~3500            | 36                 | 25                     |
|                   | 3500~5000            | 12                 | 10.07                  |
|                   | Over 5000            | 5                  | 4.17                   |
|                   | **Total**            | **101**            | **35.07**              |

From Table 5, it can be concluded that 71.53% of interviewees were women, mostly between the ages of 18 and 45. A majority of them held an undergraduate degree, corresponding with high literacy. This group of people was the typical customers that frequently buy clothes online and physical store.

3.3. Test of Reliability and Validity

The reliability of this study is guaranteed by the reliability of the questionnaire design and the reliability of the internal coherence of questionnaire findings. To identify measurement indicators for the variables, we mainly referred to scales that were used by domestic and foreign scholars and were relatively mature compared to their initial versions. These were revised and adjusted according to the purpose of this study. Prior to the official survey, we revised the questionnaire for a second time after conducting a small-scale pre-test and obtaining feedback to further adjust the questionnaires. After the survey, questionnaire findings were assessed by the widely used Cronbach’s alpha, which is used to test the reliability of internal coherence, with SPSS17.0. The findings are shown that the Cronbach’s alphas of the scale and sub-scale both exceed 0.7 (The value of Cronbach’s alphas with experience with shopping environment, experience with staff service, experience with shopping procedure, product experience, customer satisfaction are 0.701, 0.767, 0.808, 0.867, 0.912). According to Guieford [50], this shows that the data exhibit reliability for further analysis.

Generally, an indicator of validity in an empirical study is structural validity. Since content and criterion validity require strict control during the process of acquiring the sample data, and they were explained in detail in the part of the acquisition of the research data and were shown to be sound, structure validity is the main indicator to be assessed here. It is measured through factor analysis and judged based on the KMO value, Bartlett test of Sphericity, the cumulative percentage of variance, and value of factor loading. Validity is proved to be satisfactory if the KMO values exceed 0.5, the “Sig. value of Approx. Chi-Square” of the Bartlett test of Sphericity is below 0.05, the cumulative percentage of variance exceeds 50%, and the absolute values of factor loadings exceed 0.4. The findings show that the absolute values of factor loadings all exceed 0.5, the KMO values all exceed 0.5 (the KMO values with experience with shopping environment, experience with staff service, experience with shopping procedure, product experience, customer satisfaction are 0.585, 0.648, 0.7, 0.821, 0.913, respectively), meeting the requirement for validity in an empirical study is met.
4. Results

4.1. Relevant Analysis

Prior to data analysis, the researchers calculated the average values and standard deviation of the control variables, independent variables, and dependent variables as well as their relevant coefficients. The results are shown in Table 6.

| Variables                        | Mean   | Standard Deviation | 1    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Experience with shopping environment | 3.566  | 0.798              | -    |       |       |       |       |       |
| Experience with staff service    | 3.615  | 0.815              | 0.809*** | -     |       |       |       |       |
| Experience with shopping procedure | 3.743  | 0.848              | 0.666*** | 0.676*** | -     |       |       |       |
| Product experience               | 3.564  | 0.793              | 0.707*** | 0.687*** | 0.802*** | -     |       |       |
| Customer satisfaction            | 3.587  | 0.783              | 0.719*** | 0.711*** | 0.767*** | 0.842*** | -     |       |
| Shopping situation               | -      | -                  | 0.003 | 0.007 | -0.016 | -0.021 | -0.055 | -     |
| Gender                           | -      | -                  | -0.014 | 0.043 | 0.015 | -0.035 | -0.044 | 0.000 |

Note: *** means \( p < 0.001 \).

Relevant analysis suggests that the coefficients of experience with shopping environment, experience with staff service, experience with shopping procedure, and product experience are evident in different levels of statistics. Most coefficients are of moderate relevance for further analysis. Nevertheless, it can be observed that the coefficients of a few variables are relatively high, which can be attributed to the selection of variables in this study and may cause multicollinearity in the regression analysis. The present study examines and controls indicators of multicollinearity in the regression analysis and controls the multicollinearity itself with a regression analysis, to remove its influence on the research model.

4.2. Common Method Variance

Common method variance is another important factor influencing the research model. The variance was tested using Harman’s Single-Factor Test. An exploratory factor analysis through a principal component analysis shows that the five factors selected explain 72.59% of the total variance; factor 1 explains 34.02% of the total variance, which is less than half of it. This proves that the common method variance in this paper is well-controlled.

4.3. Regression Analysis

SPSS 17.0 was used to test the hypothesis and calculate the data. A regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the four dimensions of customer experience and customer satisfaction, as well as the moderating role of the shopping situation and gender in the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 8 shows the results of the regression analysis of the moderating effect of shopping situations. Model 2 indicates that customer experience is positively correlated with customer satisfaction (ESE: \( \beta = 0.125, p < 0.1 \); ESS: \( \beta = 0.129, p < 0.1 \); ESP: \( \beta = 0.160, p < 0.1 \); PS: \( \beta = 0.514, p < 0.1 \)). In Model 3, after controlling for age, education background, and monthly income, the shopping situation partially moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. This indicates that different shopping situations positively influence the relationship between experience with shopping environment and customer satisfaction (SS*ESE: \( \beta = 0.180, p < 0.1 \); SS*PE: \( \beta = -0.225, p < 0.1 \)). The moderating of the shopping situation markedly influences the relationship between product experience and customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, shopping situations scarcely influence this relationship (SS * ESS: \( \beta = 0.117, p > 0.1 \); SS * ESP: \( \beta = 0.041, p > 0.1 \)). The analysis shows that
the influence of ESS and ESP on customer satisfaction is not affected or restricted by the shopping situation, suggesting that a pleasant experience with ESS and ESP is a basic requirement for customer satisfaction in both online and physical store commerce.

Table 7. Results on the moderating role of the shopping situation between customer experience and customer satisfaction.

| Variables                          | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Variables                          | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|---------|
|                                    | \( \beta \) | \( \beta \) | \( \beta \) |                                    | \( \beta \) | \( \beta \) |
| Experience with shopping environment (ESE) | 0.126 * | 0.127 * | 0.151 ** | Experience with shopping environment (ESE) | 0.123 * | 0.139 ** |
| Experience with staff service (ESS) | 0.133 * | 0.134 * | 0.121 * | Experience with staff service (ESS) | 0.138 ** | 0.123 * |
| Experience with shopping procedure (ESP) | 0.174 *** | 0.173 *** | 0.182 *** | Experience with shopping procedure (ESP) | 0.177 *** | 0.178 *** |
| Product experience (PE) | 0.522 *** | 0.520 *** | 0.493 *** | Product experience (PE) | 0.517 *** | 0.519 *** |
| Shopping situation (SS) | -0.043 | -0.044 | Gender (GE) | Shopping situation (SS) | -0.033 | -0.033 |
| SS*ESE | 0.092 | GE * ESE | 0.140 ** | SS*ESE | 0.061 | GE * ESS | -0.095 |
| SS*ESS | 0.061 | GE * ESS | 0.073 | SS*ESS | 0.022 | GE * ESP | 0.073 |
| SS*ESP | -0.114 | GE * PE | -0.109 * | SS*ESP | -0.114 | GE * PE | -0.109 * |
| \( R^2 \) | 0.755 | 0.759 | 0.763 | \( R^2 \) | 0.755 | 0.760 |
| \( \Delta R^2 \) | 0.755 | 0.004 | 0.008 | \( \Delta R^2 \) | 0.000 | 0.005 |
| Sig. of \( R^2 \) | 0.000 | 0.140 | 0.014 | Sig. of \( R^2 \) | 0.261 | 0.052 |
| F | 232.239 | 179.771 | 104.336 | F | 179.014 | 102.440 |
| Sig. of Model | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | Sig. of Model | 0.000 | 0.000 |

Note: * means \( p < 0.05 \), ** means \( p < 0.01 \), *** means \( p < 0.001 \).

Table 8. Results on the moderating role of the interaction of shopping situation and gender between customer experience and customer satisfaction.

| Variables                          | Model 6 | Model 7 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|
|                                    | \( \beta \) | \( \beta \) |
| Experience with shopping environment (ESE) | 0.123 * | 0.215 *** |
| Experience with staff service (ESS) | 0.140 ** | 0.130 ** |
| Experience with shopping procedure (ESP) | 0.176 *** | 0.319 *** |
| Product experience (PE) | 0.515 *** | 0.349 *** |
| Female * Store SS | 0.054 * | 0.058 * |
| Female * Online SS | 0.032 | 0.033 |
| Male * Store SS | 0.046 | 0.050 |
| Female * Store SS * ESE | -0.178 ** |
| Female * Store SS * ESS | 0.029 |
| Female * Store SS * ESP | -0.061 |
| Female * Store SS * PE | 0.115 * |
| Female * Online SS * ESE | -0.044 |
| Female * Online SS * ESS | -0.034 |
| Female * Online SS * ESP | -0.164 *** |
| Female * Online SS * PE | 0.095 |
| Male * Store SS * ESE | -0.009 |
| Male * Store SS * ESS | -0.059 |
| Male * Store SS * ESP | -0.092 |
| Male * Store SS * PE | 0.102 |
| \( R^2 \) | 0.755 | 0.767 |
| \( \Delta R^2 \) | 0.000 | 0.012 |
| Sig. of \( R^2 \) | 0.319 | 0.011 |
| F | 128.304 | 51.120 |
| Sig. of Model | 0.000 | 0.000 |

Note: * means \( p < 0.05 \), ** means \( p < 0.01 \), *** means \( p < 0.001 \).

Model 4 shows that customer experience is positively correlated with customer satisfaction (ESE: \( \beta = 0.120, p < 0.1 \); ESS: \( \beta = 0.133, p < 0.1 \); ESP: \( \beta = 0.164, p < 0.1 \); PS: \( \beta = 0.511, p < 0.1 \)). In Model 5,
after controlling for age, education background, and monthly income, gender partially moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. It has a positive influence on ESE ($\beta = 0.283, p < 0.1$), ESS ($\beta = -0.183, p < 0.1$), and PE ($\beta = -0.227, p < 0.1$), proving that gender markedly influences the relationship between customer experience with ESE, ESS, PE, and customer satisfaction. However, the shopping situation scarcely influences service procedure ($\beta = 0.142, p > 0.1$). The results show that the relationship between customer experience with the ESP and customer satisfaction is not affected or restricted by gender.

Table 8 shows the regression analysis results for the interaction between the moderating effect of gender and that of the shopping situation. Three dummy variables were created to represent the interaction of gender and shopping environment. Model 6 shows that customer experience is positively correlated with customer satisfaction (ESE: $\beta = 0.124, p < 0.1$; ESS: $\beta = 0.128, p < 0.1$; ESP: $\beta = 0.161, p < 0.1$; PE: $\beta = 0.516, p < 0.1$). In Model 7, after controlling for age, education background, and monthly income, the interaction between the shopping situation and gender partially moderates the relationship between the customer experience and customer satisfaction. In real situations, women are affected by the ESE ($\beta = -0.392, p < 0.1$), ESS ($\beta = 0.067, p > 0.1$), ESP ($\beta = -0.141, p > 0.1$), PE ($\beta = 0.372, p < 0.1$), whereas men are affected by ESE ($\beta = -0.016, p > 0.1$), ESS ($\beta = -0.109, p > 0.1$), ESP ($\beta = -0.146, p > 0.1$), PE ($\beta = 0.175, p > 0.1$). Compared to men, women pay more attention to their experience with the ESE and PE. This also proves that gender scarcely influences the relationship between customer experience with the ESS and customer satisfaction, customer experience with the ESP, and customer satisfaction in real situations.

In the online shopping situation, women (ESE: $\beta = 0.108, p > 0.1$; ESS: $\beta = 0.071, p > 0.1$; PE: $\beta = 0.220, p > 0.1$) are shown to behave the same as they do in the physical store shopping situation in terms of the relationship between their experience with the ESE and their customer satisfaction, their experience with ESS and their customer satisfaction, and their PE and customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, gender (ESP: $\beta = -0.381, p < 0.1$) markedly influences customer satisfaction, which indicates that enterprises should attach more importance to women’s requirements for a satisfactory experience with the service procedure in online retailing.

4.4. Robustness of the Results

The robustness test is of great significance to the analysis of the regression equation. In this research, the robustness of the regression model is tested by a variety of methods: (1) multicollinearity is tested in the process of regression analysis—we test the multicollinearity of the regression analysis by the VIF value and test the VIF value of the regression equation in Tables 7 and 8. The results show that the VIF values of Model 1 to Model 6 are less than 4, indicating that there is no serious multicollinearity between variables; in Model 7, multiple dummy variables are used as moderate variables, so there may be multicollinearity between independent variables and moderate variables. Moreover, the remove regression method is used to analyze Model 7 in this research. After eliminating the insignificant independent variables in the regression equation, the final regression model shows that the VIF values are less than 4 which also indicates that there is no serious multicollinearity between variables. (2) Heteroscedasticity test—we test the heteroscedasticity of the model by SPSS17.0 and test the heteroscedasticity by using the residual diagram and the rank correlation coefficient method. The results show that the residual diagram approximately obeys the random distribution, and further tests the correlation coefficient between the absolute value of the residual error and the independent variables, which are not significant. Therefore, it shows that there is no heteroscedasticity in the models. (3) Test of the adequacy of the model—we test the adequacy of the model through the hypothesis test of data normality and test the normality of residuals through the probability map of normal distribution. The results show that the expected cumulative probability of residuals is approximately equal to the actual cumulative probability, which conforms to the hypothesis of normal distribution. (4) Test of spatial autocorrelation of respondents—according to the questionnaire survey process, we ensure that
there is no spatial autocorrelation by selecting the IP address of the online questionnaire and different regions of the offline questionnaire in the process of the questionnaire survey.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Findings

First, the findings of the data analyses in this study show that customer experience with staff service, shopping environment, product experience, and shopping procedure positively influence customer satisfaction, supporting Hypotheses 1–4. According to the findings, all dimensions of customer service have a positive influence on customer satisfaction in both the online and physical store situations. On one hand, this affirms the theory of the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in retail enterprises [5,7] and, on the other hand, proves that all dimensions of customer experience in traditional shopping still have a positive influence on customer satisfaction despite the probable revolution and rebuilding of the shopping process induced by new internet and information technologies. In this research, the results are similar to past researches [28,29]. The retailer’s customer experience has become the key factor affecting customer satisfaction in the current market environment. In addition, the results show that customer satisfaction is the core indicator of a retailer’s successful and long-term sustainable competitiveness. It also evident that customer experience is an important source of sustainable competitive advantage for retailers through the differentiation strategy whether in physical stores or online shopping.

Second, different shopping situations markedly moderate the relationship among product experience, experience with shopping environment, and customer satisfaction, which partly validates Hypotheses 5 and 6. The results show that product experience and experience with shopping environment can influence customer satisfaction more in the store shopping situation and, therefore, to improve customer satisfaction, it is more effective for physical store retailers to invest in enhancing product experience and experience with the shopping environment. On the other hand, the influence of experience with staff service and customer experience with the shopping procedure on customer satisfaction is not affected or restricted by the shopping situation, indicating that a pleasant experience with staff service and the shopping procedure is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction in both online and physical store commerce. These findings verify the uniqueness of customer experience in different shopping situations and the different impacts on customer satisfaction. It is consistent with the previous literature, that is, in the context of online shopping and big data, retailers need to focus on the differentiation of customer experience in order to improve customer satisfaction, and then obtain competitive advantage and sustainability [2,3]. Artusi, Bellini, Dell’Era, and Verganti’s [27] research also indicated that the relationship between shopping experience and customer satisfaction is significantly different in different shopping situations. Both traditional physical retailers and online retailers can use customer experience to create their own niche markets, formulate differentiated competitive strategies, create different excellent customer experiences, improve customer satisfaction, and obtain unique sustainable competitive advantages.

Finally, gender moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. At the same time, gender, through its interaction with shopping situations, also moderates the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction. In real situations, women, compared to men, pay more attention to their experience with the shopping environment and the product. In the online shopping situation, gender influences customer satisfaction through customer experience with the shopping procedure. This finding is partly consistent with previous research [8]. It suggests that retailers should consider the moderating role of gender concerning customers’ psychological feedback in both online and physical store commerce and investment in enhancing the customer experience with the shopping environment, product, and service procedure can boost customer satisfaction (of women in particular). Arijit and Manjari [3] surveyed on online customer experience, their results also showed that gender significantly regulates the relationship
between online customer experience and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, they extended the relative theory that retailers use customer experience to obtain sustainable competitive advantage. In other words, retailers in different shopping situations also need to consider the role of gender in creating a differentiated customer experience and obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study include the following. First, although existing studies have discussed factors that influence customer satisfaction in a single situation, they fail to consider the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in different shopping situations, both online shopping and physical stores. The existing studies also do not highlight the distinctiveness of the situation where online and physical store commerce merges and thrives. The present study incorporated the factor of shopping situations as a moderating variable to study the changes in factors that influence customer satisfaction in different situations using empirical research, addressing the deficiencies of previous studies to a certain degree. Second, the study discussed the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction in the complicated context of retail with the merging of online and physical store commerce. From the perspective of customer experience, it systematically explored the influence of the consumption process on customer satisfaction in various online and physical store situations, adding to the theory of the experience mechanism of how customer satisfaction takes shape. Furthermore, it incorporated gender into a research model to test and analyze the moderating role of gender itself and the interaction of gender and shopping situations in the main pathway, thus building a complete research model. This allows more enriching, systematic, and comprehensive studies to be conducted on customer satisfaction. Thus, our theoretical contribution is integrating and expanding the relationship among customer experience, customer satisfaction, and sustainable competitive advantage. In the retail industry, the emergence of new technologies, such as internet technology, make the competition more and more challenging. Thence, the relationship among customer experience, customer satisfaction, and sustainable competitive advantage has become more and more close. The integration and use of new situations to create excellent customer experiences for improved customer satisfaction have gradually become the main path for retailers to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage [27].

5.3. Suggestions for Companies’ Practices

Companies could improve their practices in the following aspects:

First, retailers need to merge online and physical store retail to improve customer experience and customer satisfaction. It can help retailers to achieve a better and faster understanding of the customer experience and the goals of sustaining long-term competitive advantages. Retailers should: (1) diversify their methods of promotion, and attract consumers through multiple channels and establish a strong relationship with them through online marketing on mobile devices; (2) generate traffic with the help of social networks and promotional coupons for customers and followers; (3) practice affiliate marketing to penetrate target customer groups.

Second, retailers need to practice sales management and value shopping situations and gender. In order to obtain a sustainable competitive differentiation, they should establish a scientific and effective system of sales management, consider the influence of different situations and genders on the relationship between customer experience and customer satisfaction, provide the best shopping experience for customers, build a good brand image, and launch customer-centric marketing campaigns.

Finally, retailers should connect online and physical store channels to provide the perfect shopping experience for consumers: (1) they should use digital technology to build two-way interconnectivity of online and physical store commerce; (2) they should connect the coupling channel of online and physical store commerce and establish a complete system network; (3) they should rely on system synergy and the capability of data analysis to facilitate the optimization of customer experience in all situations and effectively better sustaining long-term customer satisfaction.
5.4. Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations to this study. First, the sample used is limited to consumers that have purchased clothes both online and physical store, without addressing other categories of commodities. This can be done in future research. Then, the time limit imposed for completing the questionnaire may have caused errors in the research. We suggest applying alternative data collection methods, allowing for stronger conclusions to be drawn about our model’s robustness.

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