

BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL BUYER – EXPLORING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ANTICIPATED EMOTIONS

Abstract: Presence of anticipated emotions in an organizational buying scenario is explored and the interaction of employee seniority and type of organization with anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase assessed. Empirical study conducted during the research indicates that both positive and negative anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase are experienced. It was also found that the levels of anticipated emotions experienced vary with the type of organization and the seniority level of the buying center executives.

Keywords: Anticipated Emotions, B2B, Behavioral Intention

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Type of Paper : Competitive

INTRODUCTION

‘Anticipated Emotions’ is akin to affective forecasting and is the belief about an individual’s emotional response to future outcomes (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003; Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003). Bagozzi et. al. (2016) explored mediating effect of anticipated emotions (AE) in formation of purchase intention and proposed that the amount of information received during a purchase decision process and the favorable/ unfavorable outcome decision post evaluation leads to consideration of both positive and negative anticipated emotions of purchase as well as non-purchase decision, prior to formation of the purchase intention. Though relationship between actual outcome and actual emotions is generally found to be stronger than that between anticipated outcome and anticipated emotions (Bohm & Pfister, 2008), anticipated emotions support individuals to make a choice. While ‘anticipatory emotions’ refers to emotions experienced at present due to the prospect of a future event, ‘anticipated emotions’ are referred to emotions expected to be experienced in future based on the occurrence of an event in future (Baumgartner et. al., 2008). Mellers & Mc Graw (2001) refer to it as people anticipating how they will feel about future outcomes and using those feelings to guide choices in present. Hence both anticipatory as well as anticipated emotions affect decision making.

Intention is an individual’s self-instructions to behave in a certain way (Triandis, 1979). It is assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior indicating how hard people are willing to try, or how much of an effort they are planning to exert in order to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral intent has also been referred to signals that show if a customer will continue to utilize a company’s services in future (Zeithaml et. al., 1996). In consumer behavior models, the mediating role of ‘Anticipated Emotions’ has been widely explored and impact of both anticipated emotions of purchase as well as that of non-purchase affecting the behavioral intention of a buyer well established. With recent conceptualization of customer experience in organizational buying as well, researchers have started exploring the role of emotions in B2B industry. Traditionally, in organizational buying, vendor evaluation (product or service) is believed to lead to formation of behavioral intention. The role of anticipated emotions in organizational buying is relatively less explored.

This research attempts to bridge the above gap by conducting an empirical study to verify if anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase are experienced in an organizational buying situation at an individual level at the time of vendor evaluation, prior to the joint decision taken to select a vendor by buying center members. In addition to this we also explore if seniority level of the buying center member and type of organization has an influence on the anticipated emotions experienced at the individual level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of emotions in decision making has intrigued scholars over several decades and various theories on decision making have been proposed in the past (Nicosia, 1966; Engel et. al., 1968; Howard & Sheth, 1969). Most of these do not treat affect as a major driving force and

stress on cognitive rational approach for decision making. Though some behavioral model do indirectly indicate the presence of non-cognitive factors in decision making like the non-task factors (Webster & Wind, 1972) bargaining and politicking (Sheth, 1973), affect influencing decision making in organizational buying is not yet widely acceptable. Emotion and cognition were traditionally considered to represent two fundamentally different processes (Hilgard, 1980) and most of the research on decision making considered it to be a rational cognitive process. Recent evidence in decision making suggests intertwining of the cognitive and emotional processes (Clore et. al., 2000, 2001) with the brain processing information in emotional centers (Damasio, 1996). The affect-as-information model proposed by Clore et. al. (2001) also discusses the ways in which affect influences judgement and decision making. These discussions indicate that decision making is no longer perceived as a pure cognitive process and role of emotions in decision making is gaining cognizance amongst researchers in the decision model field.

Gilbert & Wilson (2007) argue that emotional consequences of an event are predicted by individuals involved in decision making by simulating that event in future. Previous experienced emotions along with anticipated risks in selecting an option affect the anticipated emotional reactions to anticipated outcomes (Bohm & Pfister, 2008). The decision affect theory (Mellers et. al., 1997) predicts that choice between risky options is guided by maximum positive anticipated emotional experience from the options available. Hence, consumers prefer that option from which they expect maximum pleasure derivation in future. Bagozzi et. al. (2016) use the concept of anticipated emotions to propose that decision making depends on whether the purchase or non-purchase will make an individual feel better or worse. Anticipated emotions of both purchase and non-purchase are assessed in terms of positive and negative anticipated emotions prior to formation of the purchase intent. We can hence conclude that anticipated emotions drive behavioral intent of a consumer.

The above discussions on anticipated emotions primarily focus on a business to consumer scenario. Anticipated emotions in an organizational buying scenario are relatively unexplored. An exploratory research done earlier indicated the presence of emotions while decision making in organizational buying (Pandey & Mookerjee, 2018). Organizational buying involves members from different teams coming together in the buying center with a specific role to play. Each individual assesses the options available and will go through an emotional experience which will guide individual preference of a vendor. A joint decision for final vendor selection is subsequently taken amongst all the buying center members. Extending the above concept of anticipated emotions to an organizational buying scenario, we posit that buying center members while assessing a mix of vendors to make their recommendation will be guided by the emotional consequences of purchase from that vendor at an individual level. Hence anticipated emotions of purchase or non-purchase from a specific vendor will guide their purchase intent towards that vendor leading to our first proposition –

Proposition 1: Anticipated outcome of a vendor selection in future leads to anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase at an individual level amongst the buying center members

The members of buying center are drawn from different teams and usually are at different seniority levels. Empirical studies suggest as employees mature in an organization their

understanding and control of emotions improves as compared to younger members of the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2009). We can hence posit that senior members of the team will have lower levels of anticipated emotions as compared to junior members of the team. Hong et. al. (2016) studied the influence of rank and seniority on affective organizational commitment and found that it moderates the organizational commitment. Hence we conclude that seniority levels will affect anticipated emotions of an individual leading to our next proposition -

Proposition 2: Seniority level of the buying center members influences anticipated emotions experienced at individual level by the buying center members in an organizational buying scenario

As discussed earlier, cognition and emotions operate together – emotions influence cognition in situations like learning, attention and memory, while cognition influences emotion in situations like attribute association and appraisals (Derryberry & Tucker, 1992; Damasio, 2001). Theoretically, emotions are considered irrational behavior and an organization has no place for emotion since organizations try to create impersonal and highly cognitive rational framework (Sashkin, 2007). Especially in public sector companies which are highly process oriented and follow a rigorous documentation mechanism, emotions are considered as irrational and the organizations are believed to follow a cognitive rational method to assess vendors during a buying situation. Private companies are believed to have a greater risk aptitude in decision making. Lower risk aptitude in individuals leads to lower levels of anticipated emotions as compared to individuals having higher risk aptitudes (Bohm & Pfister, 2008). We hence posit that anticipated emotions experienced by buying center members of a public company for a given situation will be lower as compared to the anticipated emotions experienced by buying center members of a private company for the same situation. This leads to our final proposition as follows –

Proposition 3: The type of organization influences anticipated emotions experienced at individual level by the buying center members in an organizational buying scenario

The model proposed for testing is represented in Figure 1.

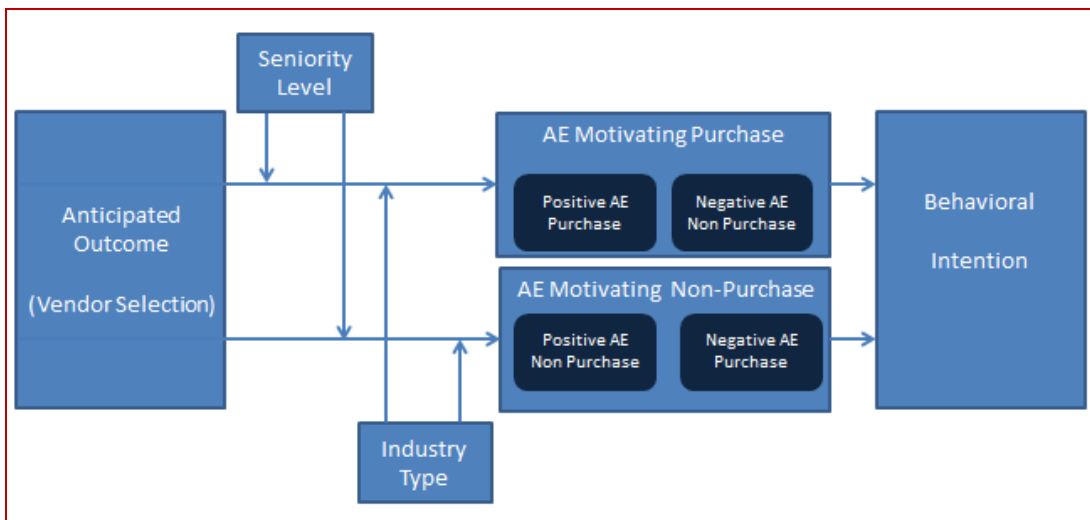


Figure – 1: Anticipated Emotions in Organizational Buying

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The study involving simulation of a vendor evaluation situation was conducted with industry participants wherein the participants assumed role of buying center members and evaluated two vendor responses to a global request for proposal (RFP). Three interactions with the vendors were simulated and at the end of each interaction, the respondents were asked to fill a questionnaire for each vendor and indicate how would they feel in both the situations - the contract being awarded to a particular vendor or not being awarded to that vendor at the end of the buying process. Hence anticipated emotions of both purchase as well as of non-purchase from each vendor were captured for each interaction. The anticipated emotions scale used by Bagozzi et. al. (2016) was adopted for this study. There were 8 items to record the positive anticipated emotions and 12 items to record the negative anticipated emotions. Respondents were asked to indicate their anticipated feelings on a 7 point scale ranging from 'Very Unlikely' to 'Very Likely'. All items were scored in a scale of 1 to 7 where a score of 1 was assigned to the emotion if 'Very Unlikely' was selected and a score of 7 assigned if 'Very Likely' was selected by the respondents. Since both positive and negative anticipated emotions of purchase as well as of non-purchase were captured, the following hypothesis were framed to test proposition 1 –

H1: Mean of positive anticipated emotions of purchase is significant

H2: Mean of negative anticipated emotions of purchase is significant

H3: Mean of negative anticipated emotions of non-purchase is significant

H4: Mean of positive anticipated emotions of non-purchase is significant

Demographic data collected during the research was used to test propositions 2 and 3. Respondents were asked to mention the type of industry – public sector or private sector they were working in. Those respondents with an industrial experience of up to eight years were classified as 'Junior Level Executives', those with more than eight years of experience and up to fifteen years for experience were classified as 'Middle Level Executives' and those having more than fifteen years of experience were classified as 'Senior Level Executives'. The following hypothesis were framed to test the interaction levels of seniority and type of industry –

H5: Mean anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase will be lower for senior members of the buying center as compared to junior members

H6: Mean anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase will be lower for buying center members of a public limited company as compared to buying center members of a private limited company

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Three studies were conducted to simulate an organizational buying situation to evaluate two vendors. 127 participants were involved in the first study out of which 75 participants continued the evaluations of each vendor for the remaining two interactions as well. One sample

t-test in SPSS was used to determine the overall mean of the sample for positive and negative anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase. The t-test results indicating mean scores for positive and negative anticipated emotions of both purchase and non-purchase are summarized in Table – 1. Based on these results, the proposed hypothesis H1, H2, H3 and H4 were accepted.

One-Sample Statistics						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
PositiveAEPurchase	554	3.9566	1.65287	.07022		
NegativeAEPurchase	550	2.5233	1.41504	.06034		
NegativeAENonPurchase	554	2.9642	1.53381	.06517		
PositiveAENonPurchase	554	3.2257	1.47368	.06261		

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 2					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Interval of the	
					Lower	Upper
PositiveAEPurchase	27.863	553	.000	1.95665	1.8187	2.0946
NegativeAEPurchase	8.673	549	.000	.52333	.4048	.6418
NegativeAENonPurchase	14.796	553	.000	.96420	.8362	1.0922
PositiveAENonPurchase	19.577	553	.000	1.22574	1.1028	1.3487

Table – 1: One Sample T Test Results

Interactions between seniority level, the type of organization and anticipated emotions were used to test hypothesis H5 and H6. The interactions for anticipated emotions motivating purchase and non-purchase are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The interaction diagram for all four anticipated emotions indicates that marginal mean of anticipated emotions varies with seniority level for both the type of organization – public and private. Both main effects and interaction effects were present for the anticipated emotions.

Considering the anticipated emotions of purchase, it was found that in case of the positive anticipated emotions of purchase, the marginal means for respondents from a public limited company were higher than that of private companies. The anticipated emotions of non-purchase reflected very close marginal mean levels for negative anticipated emotions of purchase across the seniority levels for both private and public sector companies. It can be seen that mean of anticipated emotions of purchase in case of senior members of the buying center is higher than that of the junior members. We conclude from these discussions that although there is an interaction of seniority level and type of industry with the anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase, this phenomenon requires more detailed study. Hence hypothesis H5 and H6 are rejected.

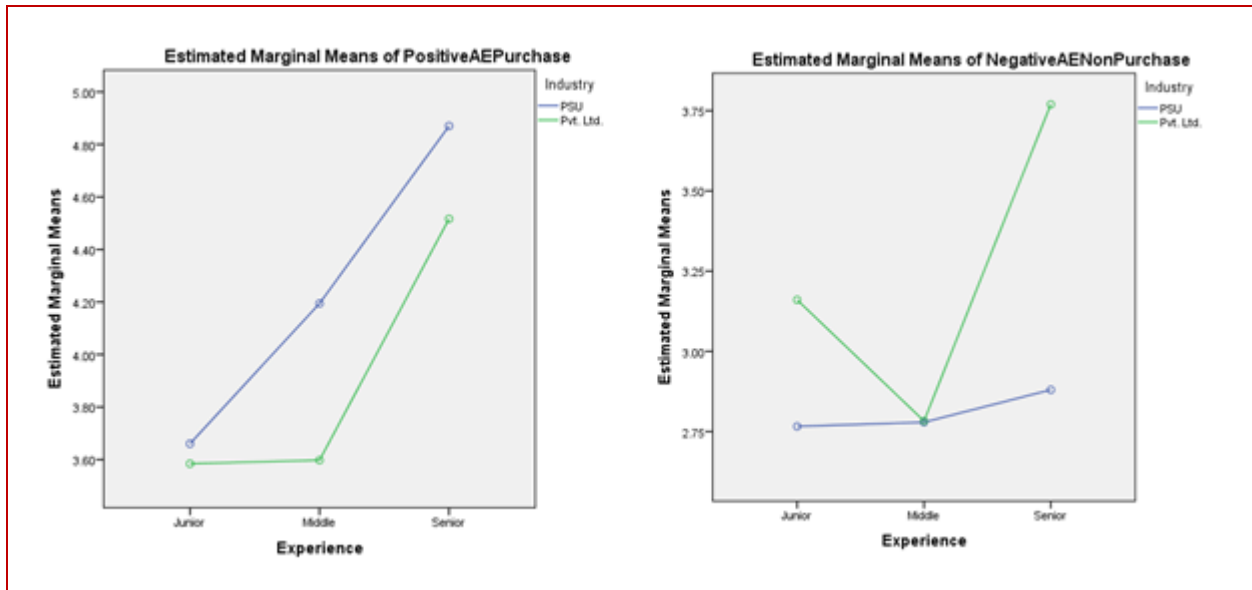


Figure – 2: Experience and Industry Interaction – AE Motivating Purchase

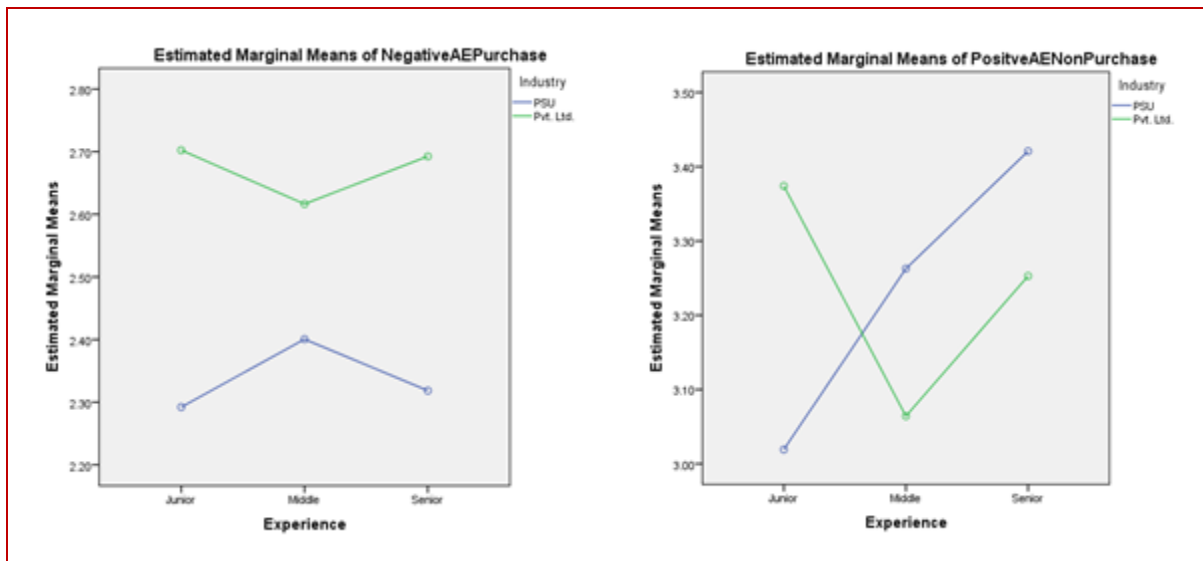


Figure – 3: Experience and Industry Interaction - AE Motivating Non-Purchase

ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Findings of this research supported presence of anticipated emotions of purchase and non-purchase in an organizational buying scenario. It also supported that there is an interaction of seniority levels and the type of organization with anticipated emotions. The study also

indicates that emotions have a role to play in organizational buying, a concept slowly gaining acceptance in terms of customer experience models. The role of anticipated emotions of both positive and negative types are also evident, and support the existence of both emotion types in the pathway of influence on behavioral intentions proposed by Bagozzi et. al. (2016).

MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research can be useful to marketers to understand the antecedents of behavioral intent in an organizational buying scenario. The anticipated emotions of purchase or non-purchase which lead to behavioral intention are formed due to ongoing as well as previous experience of the buying center member with the vendor. It is hence important for marketers to ensure that all interactions with the buyer lead to a positive experience of the buyer so that their chances of selection improve.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

Findings of this research indicate that anticipated emotions, irrespective of the seniority and type of organization, are present in an organizational buying scenario. Anticipated emotions have been found to affect behavioral intention in consumer decisions and may hence have a role to play in organizational buying decision process. Future research may be directed towards further exploring the role of emotions and developing a more comprehensive organizational buying behavior model which takes into account the emotional effects. The role of anticipated emotions with respect to the types of industry as well as the seniority level of buying center members may also be studied to have a better understanding on its impact.

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