

Value Development During the Customization Process: A Longitudinal Analysis

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Abstract

Online configurators provide consumers with the opportunity to customize products tailored to their needs. While much research has investigated the outcome of these self-design processes, this study is the first that analyzes the consumers' experiences during the creative process. FaceReader technology allows to observe the evolution of valence unobtrusively at the individual level. The authors find a u-shaped path of valence. The initial decline is caused by the laborious need to learn how to master the configurator and to gain insight into one's own preferences, while the increase is caused by the flow of mastering these challenges. These findings help us to resolve a seeming contradiction: (1) research has repeatedly found that consumers are willing to pay a high premium for their customized products and (2) the termination rates in practice are very high. It appears that many consumers do not emerge from the affective "valley of death."

Keywords: *mass customization ; FaceReader; affect*

Track: Consumer Behaviour