

Thrilled or Angry: Consumer Emotions on Black Friday

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Black Friday (BF), the day after Thanksgiving in the U.S., serves to kickoff holiday shopping. BF represents a unique consumption ritual, blending traditional shopping for bargains with holiday social rituals (Thomas & Peters, 2011). Despite safety concerns on BF and misbehavior over bargains (Lennon et al., 2014), BF is a part of Thanksgiving tradition for many U.S. families (Thomas & Peters, 2011). Recently the U.K., Canada, and South Korea have adopted BF, while China and Mexico have created BF-inspired shopping days. Given the increasing popularity of BF from the U.S. to other countries, this study aims to investigate factors impacting evaluation of BF. Objectives were: (1) to identify personal and situational factors evoking emotions on BF and (2) to examine the role of emotions in evaluation of BF.

Conceptual Development. Schema theory (Wyer, 1980) and cognitive theory of emotion (Mandler, 1984) identify experience and expectations as personal antecedents to emotion on BF. As mental knowledge structures abstracted from experience, schemas shape what people expect, which subsequently impact the evaluation of their experience. On BF, consumers' schemas about BF shaped by prior BF shopping experience impact BF expectations. Absent prior BF shopping experience, consumers likely form expectations based on promotions and media hype. Mandler's cognitive theory of emotion explains that negative emotion is evoked if discrepancies exist between expectations and experience and positive emotion is evoked when expectations are met or exceeded. The General Aggression Model (GAM, Anderson & Bushman, 2002) explains how goal blockage (a situational factor) evokes emotions. On BF, goal blockage is common from stockouts of promoted items and promotional restrictions. Finally, literature offers ample support for the impact of emotions on consumers (e.g., Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Based on these arguments and the theories, four hypotheses were developed. H1: Prior experience shopping on BF will affect expectations. H2: BF expectations will affect emotions. H3: Goal blockage will affect emotions. H4: Emotions will affect evaluation of BF shopping.

Method. Pretests with undergraduates were conducted to (a) develop stimuli for goal blockage scenarios, (b) identify emotion items relevant to BF, and (c) test the goal blockage scenarios. In the main study student BF shoppers from four U.S. universities participated in an online experiment. All scale items came from the research literature, had appropriate reported reliabilities, were adapted to reflect BF shopping, and used rating scales. Demographic information was also gathered.

Results and conclusions. Predominantly Caucasian female students with prior BF experience participated ($N=339$; $M_{age}=21.0$). Multi-item measures were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and reliability analyses ($\alpha s=.83-.94$). Based on EFAs, composite scores were calculated for all variables: one experience factor, three expectation factors (extreme

expectations, expectations of trust and expectations of poor employee service), two emotion factors (thrilled and angry), and one evaluation factor.

Path analysis using maximum likelihood estimation had acceptable model fit, $\chi^2=19.64$ ($p<.01$), NFI=.95, IFI=.97, CFI=.97 and RMSEA=.07. Prior BF shopping experience increased extreme expectations ($\beta=.24$, $t=4.50$, $p<.0001$) and expectations of trust ($\beta=.19$, $t=3.48$, $p<.001$), but not expectations of poor employee service, partially supporting H1. Extreme expectations increased both positive ($\beta=.26$, $t=5.01$, $p<.0001$) and negative ($\beta=.27$, $t=5.24$, $p<.0001$) emotions. Expectations of trust increased negative emotion ($\beta=.11$, $t=2.02$, $p<.05$), but not positive emotion. Expectations of poor employee service adversely affected positive emotion ($\beta=-.14$, $t=-2.56$, $p<.05$), but not negative emotion, partially supporting H2. MANOVA was used to test H3; goal blockage affected positive ($F_{2, 336}=92.03$, $p<.0001$) and negative ($F_{2, 336}=46.20$, $p<.0001$) emotion. Tukey post-hoc tests found that positive emotion (thrilled) was highest when goals were not blocked and negative emotion (angry) was highest when goals were blocked. Path analysis showed that positive emotion impacted evaluation of BF shopping ($\beta=.14$, $t=3.44$, $p<.0001$), but negative emotion did not, partially supporting H4. Decomposition of effects showed that prior BF experience not only had significant indirect effects on positive and negative emotions via expectations, but also had a significant direct impact on BF evaluation. This is consistent with literature on expectations and Schema theory (Wyer, 1980). Prior BF experience was related to positive expectations, suggesting that BF shoppers have had positive experiences leading to high expectations for BF shopping. Results show that BF shoppers expect and trust retailers to deliver dependable services on BF and that positive emotion has a critical role on BF.

As found by Thomas and Peters (2011), shoppers enjoy BF as a social event with family members and close friends. Despite occasional goal blockage (from stockouts or waiting), BF shopping may be more than getting bargains. Perhaps the thrill of the hunt and the fun of social shopping ease the impact of negative emotion on BF evaluation. This study identified personal (experience, expectations) and situational (goal blockage) antecedents to BF evaluation and offers empirical evidence to support schema theory (Wyer, 1980), cognitive theory of emotion (Mandler, 1984), and GAM (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) in the BF context. Results suggest the importance of managing expectations and maintaining service on BF. Future research could include more diverse groups of BF shoppers and examine how BF evaluation is related to BF misbehavior.

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