


Chapter 4

Leveraging Technology to Enhance the Webrooming Experience in the Automotive Service Sector


Sahil Kohli

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3792-988X>
Chandigarh University, India

Anil Kalotra

Chandigarh University, India

Rishi Prakash Shukla

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0854-7302>
Jaipuria Institute of Management, India

ABSTRACT

Exploring how Technology might help in the Webrooming Scenario in the Automotive Service Industry, this Chapter is organized. In analysing the subject of the book chapter, the authors focus on such aspects as the evolution of the industry, the use of Webrooming in the purchasing process. It also deliberation on different technologies including Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Virtual and Augmented Reality, and Internet of Thing that may help to enhance trust, transparency and engagement while using Webrooming System. As the chapter demonstrated, the actual application of the Conceptual Framework of Webrooming supported by advanced technologies among key automotive brands is shown through their cases. To those automotive service providers who want to use information technology in webrooming, the authors give guidelines and suggestions. Past work and approaches are also discussed, followed by discussion of the ethical issues and the directions for future research work so that reader is well-aware with the prospects and limitations in this growing domain of study.

INTRODUCTION

The automotive service industry is expanding at a very fast pace because of the dynamic technological developments as well as customers' changing preferences (Gao et al., 2016). Analysing Consumers' Behaviour and the means they used to find the necessary information before making a purchase, the notion of webrooming has emerged as an essential phenomenon of the modern world (Flavián et al., 2020). Webrooming is defined as the

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situation where a consumer browses the internet to make a decision on what to buy or what service to look for in a physical store (Verhoef et al., 2007). This shift in consumers' attitude has added some pressure and new prospects for automotive service providers depending on how effective they are going to target and fit into the digital targeted customer (Montoya-Weiss et al., 2003).

The Changing Environment of Automotive Service Industry

The automotive service industry has had a dramatic transformation in the last few decades as innovation and the market demand have transformed the field (Gao et al., 2016). The myriad of apps that customers can use on their smart phones, booking platforms, and virtual reality like applications have altered how customers are able to engage with automotive services (Gretzel et al., 2020). With digital transformation, the customer experiences have been changed and at the same time, competition has come up with new strategies for the service providers in the highly competitive market environment (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Also, there is enhanced data and analysis availability, which gives the automotive service providers an understanding of customers' preference and behaviour (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). Thus, using these insights, service providers can accurately market their service, offer customization and improve the service quality per received by the customers (Rust & Huang, 2014). Therefore, it has taken a transition for the automotive service industries from product logic to customer logic, that is from focusing in value delivery for a mass market to the delivery of value addition services for individual customers (Ostrom et al., 2015).

The Importance of Webrooming in the Consumer Journey

Webrooming has become an important aspect of the customer journey map as it allows the customer to decide when the time is right to make the purchase or make a booking or seek service from the auto mechanic (Flavián et al., 2020). This has been made possible by the availability of information in the internet together with the improved trust on information retrieved from the internet (Kang, 2018). Webrooming is done more to obtain further information about the services various providers offer, to check more reviews, and on price variations concerning the service being bought (Santos & Gonçalves, 2019). In so doing, they feel more in control and complied when making decisions for themselves and this leads to higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty as posited by Flavián et al., (2020).

Furthermore, research studies on webrooming show that the activity enhances the customers' purchase intentions (Fernández et al., 2018). The time that customers use for searching information on the Internet, it is likely to make the purchase because they have invested time and effort (Aw et al., 2021). This emphasises the need for car service providers to improve the management of their online advertising and ensure that they offer accurate reliable information hence helping in the webrooming process (Kang, 2018).

The Use of Technology in Improving the Webrooming Experience

Therefore, technology assumes central position in the optimization of the webrooming experience for auto service customers (Gretzel et al., 2020). With the help of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data analytics, the services' providers can make an efficient experience an accurate and relevant information, and align customers' decision-making procedures (Wallace et al., 2022). For instance, AI in customer interaction relates to the support and assistance provided to customers during their research process

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