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## **HOW TO AVOID WEBROOMING BEHAVIOR IMPROVING CONSUMER EXPERIENCE USING THEIR ONLINE TOUCHPOINTS WITH BRAND**

**ÁREA TEMÁTICA: MARKETING**

Djonata Schiessl, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil, djonataschiessl@yahoo.com.br

Letícia Monteiro Pimentel, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil, le.mpimentel@gmail.com

Helison Bertoli Alves Dias, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil, helison.bertoli@gmail.com

Demétrio de Mendonça Junior, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil, deemetriomendonca@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

With growing use of technology consumers have more options to buy products. It changes the way to purchase on internet and choose the best item. The technology affects consumers since imagining they need a product and searches the best option (Prepurchase); they effectively buy the product (Purchase), and enjoy the product and use customer services (Postpurchase). The possibility to search in online channels and buy in a physical store (webrooming) bring some problems to business that focus just on online channel, it can decrease profits and sells. In this research, we show how to work the three steps of consumer journey and how brands can use touchpoints with consumer to reducing webrooming behavior improving consumer experience in these touchpoints.

**Keywords:** Webrooming; customer journey; customer experience.

### **Resumo**

Com o crescente uso da tecnologia, os consumidores têm mais opções para comprar produtos. Isso também afeta a maneira de comprar na internet e escolher o melhor item. A tecnologia afeta os consumidores, desde perceber a necessidade de um produto, encontrar a melhor opção (Pré-compra); efetivamente comprar o produto (Compra) e desfrutar do produto ou serviço (pós-compra). A possibilidade de pesquisar em canais on-line e comprar em uma loja física (webrooming) traz alguns problemas para os negócios que se concentram apenas no canal online, podendo diminuir os lucros e as vendas. Nesta pesquisa, mostramos como trabalhar as três etapas da jornada do consumidor e como as marcas podem usar os pontos de contato com o consumidor para reduzir o comportamento de webrooming, melhorando a experiência do consumidor nesses pontos de contato.

**Palavras-chave:** Webrooming; jornada do cliente; experiência do cliente.

### **Resumen**

Con el creciente uso de la tecnología, los consumidores tienen más opciones para comprar productos. Cambia la forma de comprar en internet y elegir el mejor artículo. La tecnología afecta a los consumidores desde que se imaginan que necesitan un producto y busca la mejor opción (Prepurchase); efectivamente compran el producto (Compra), y disfrutan del producto y usan los servicios al cliente (Compra posterior). La posibilidad de buscar en

canales en línea y comprar en una tienda física (webrooming) trae algunos problemas a las empresas que se centran solo en el canal en línea, puede disminuir las ganancias y vender. En esta investigación, mostramos cómo trabajar los tres pasos del viaje del consumidor y cómo las marcas pueden usar los puntos de contacto con el consumidor para reducir el comportamiento de la red y mejorar la experiencia del consumidor en estos puntos de contacto.

**Palabras clave:** webrooming; viaje del cliente; experiencia

## Introduction

Customer journey has been changed in last years because of increasing number of sale channels (Barwitz & Maas, 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The technology was one of the most important agents to make these changes, it permitted to create websites and online stores and these actions produced more options to consumers (Barwitz & Maas, 2018; Pavlou, 2018).

It carries to some changes on customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Customer journey according to Lemon & Verhoef (2016), is characterized in three ways: 1) Prepurchase; 2) purchase and; 3) postpurchase. With the increasing number of sales channel, consumers can change the channel in the middle of buying process (Pavlou, 2018). For example, the customer can start purchasing on internet and finish it in an offline store. This behavior is recognized as webrooming (Arora & Sahney, 2018b).

Webrooming behavior frequently happens on internet when customer looks the product in some online stores but when they decide to buy it they go to physical store to finish the process (Arora & Sahney, 2018a). This attitude made by consumers is bad to business that sells products just in online stores and carries to low profits and decreasing sales (Arora & Sahney, 2018b; Fernández, Pérez, & Vázquez-Casielles, 2018).

Webrooming behavior can occur because of some failures made by brand, or because of some consumers characteristics (Arora & Sahney, 2017; Paper, Ho, & Minh, 2016). Low truth on online stores, for example, carry consumer to look on internet and buy offline (Arora & Sahney, 2018a), other research made by Fernández et al (2018), showed that some consumers need to touch the product, because this characteristic they need to buy it in a physical store.

Past research like Lemon & Verhoef (2016), show that consumer journey changed on last years, the touchpoints between consumer and Bussines increase with growing use of technology, like mobile devices. Lemon & Verhoef (2016) demonstrated that consumer experience affects all process of consumer journey and improve the relationship with the brand.

In their research, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) showed that the experience of consumer is made in consumer journey. The brand can use touchpoints to increase consumer experience and improve consumer loyalty toward brand (Gregoire et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

We used the paper made by Lemon & Verhoef (2016) to explain webrooming behavior using consumer experience generated within consumer-brand touchpoints in the journey. We propose that brand can reduce the effect of webrooming, making some strategies in touchpoints increasing consumer experience.

In next sessions, we will show theoretical background and our Propositions using consumer journey touchpoints between brand and consumer and how it generates webrooming behavior. We also create some Propositions conducting to some possibilities for future researches.

## Customer journey and webrooming

Consumer journey according to Lemon & Verhoef (2016) is whole process made by consumer, since imagine they need a product at the act to buy it. There are three steps that compose consumer journey: 1) Prepurchase; 2) purchase and; 3) postpurchase. These process can happen on physical stores and in online stores (Kuehnl, Jozic, & Homburg, 2019; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

On first step, the consumer is considering options, searching products and recognizing product better (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). On second step, consumer is choosing product, ordering and paying for it (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). On third step, consumer is using product, engages with brand and requests some services (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

In any steps, there are some touchpoints between brand and consumer that generate consumer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). These touch points can be brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and social owned (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The consumer experience is an important construct that conduces to consumer loyalty (Daskalopoulou & Skandalis, 2018; Kuehnl et al., 2019). It is important to brand looking to consumer journey to improve consumer loyalty toward brand (George & Wakefield, 2018; Kawaf, 2019; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

With increasing use of technology, consumers have more options to search products (Anderl, Becker, von Wangenheim, & Schumann, 2016). There are more websites and online stores offering the same product to consumer (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016; Ieva & Ziliani, 2018) is necessary to the brand make something different to attract consumers and maintain their loyalty toward brand (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016; George & Wakefield, 2018; Ieva & Ziliani, 2018; Kawaf, 2019).

Some researches like Lemon & Verhoef (2016) demonstrated that is necessary improve the touchpoints with consumer to increase consumer experience and consequently rises sales (Anderl et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In another research George & Wakefield (2018) and Kawaf (2019), showed that improve consumer experience increase consumer loyalty toward brand.

If brand makes something wrong in consumer journey it affect consumer behavior in sales channel (Halvorsrud, Kvale, & Følstad, 2016; McColl-Kennedy, Zaki, Lemon, Urmetzer, & Neely, 2019). Looking at previous research, webrooming happen when brand made some fail during consumer journey.

Webrooming occurs when someone is looking at product on internet and buy it in a physical store (Arora & Sahney, 2017). This behavior occur because some fails made by brand (Arora & Sahney, 2018b) or because of consumer's characteristics (Arora & Sahney, 2018b).

To brand this behavior is not interesting, some business focus just in online stores it can affect brand sales and profits (Anantaram Balakrishnan, Sundaresan, & Zhang, 2014). The fails made by brands in consumer journey, more specifically in touchpoints affect consumer relationship with sales channel (George & Wakefield, 2018; Kawaf, 2019).

The outcomes of this fails carry consumer to another channel to buy product, in our study we will use sites and online stores as sales channel because of importance of sales made on the internet to the economy (Statista, 2019). And because in this environment happens webrooming behavior (Arora & Sahney, 2017)

Looking to previous research, that demonstrates the importance of consumer experience made in customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), and how low experience affect consumer

relationship with brand (George & Wakefield, 2018; Kawaf, 2019), we present our first proposition.

**P1: Low customer experience (vs high) generated in customer journey, affect positively the webrooming behavior.**

We propose that this effect will occur because of low experience, it will make them choose other option to buy their product. Webrooming will occur because brand does not pay attention in consumer journey, especially, on consumer-brand touchpoints, it carry consumer to choose other option in this situation, another channel to buy the product.

To brand that have just an online store it affect their profits and sales (Arora & Sahney, 2017), is necessary to create some strategies making consumer loyal to the brand (George & Wakefield, 2018; Kawaf, 2019; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and buy the product in online store, reducing the effect of webrooming.

Webrooming behavior generally occurs in Prepurchase and purchase stages, because consumer is just searching the best product , in these situations is easier to consumer see the product on internet and buy it in physical store (Arora & Sahney, 2017). How was demonstrated by Lemon & Verhoef (2016), consumer experience is made during all consumer journey, including post-purchase.

Sometimes consumer buy product just one time in their entire life (e.g house) or buy product more times (e.g Pants) (Anderson, Foros, & Kind, 2017). Bad experiences generated in post-purchase affect consumer behavior toward brand if they need to buy product again. They consider other brand or channel in subsequent purchase (Anderson et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Previous research in webrooming behavior demonstrated that consumer change their choice in Prepurchase and purchase steps (Arora & Sahney, 2017; Anantaram Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Fernández et al., 2018). How has demonstrates by Kumar, Keller, & Lemon (2016) all journey is important to improve consumer experience, Anderson et al (2017) showed that consumer behavior change if they need to buy product just one time or more times. Looking to these results we propose that:

**P2: Low experience (vs high) in postpurchase step affect positively the webrooming behavior in next purchase.**

Last researches did not explore the effect of repeated purchase on webrooming behavior (Arora & Sahney, 2017; A Balakrishnan, Sundaresan, & Zhang, 2014; Fernández et al., 2018), when consumer will buy the product more than one time their behavior will be affected by experience generated in postpurchase, and it carry consumer to webrooming behavior in next purchase. To complement previous research, we propose that experience generated in all stages of consumer journey lead to webrooming behavior.

How was propose by Lemon & Verhoef (2016) the brand can use touchpoints with consumer to increase their loyalty toward brand building a good experience to customer. We propose that using touchpoints, brands can reduce webrooming. In next session, we show which are the brand-consumer touchpoints can be used to avoid this behavior.

## *Touchpoints*

To brand creates a good experience to customer is necessary to use touchpoints to do it (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). According Lemon & Verhoef (2016) there are 4 types of brand-consumer touchpoints: 1) the brand-owned; 2) Partner owned; 3) consumer-owned and; 4) Social- owned. These different touchpoints impact consumer in different ways (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Touchpoints in offline or online stores have the same influences as proposed by (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) but the types of touchpoints are different in offline and online stores. For example in offline way, one brand-owned touchpoint is an ad in press newspaper and same touchpoint in an online way is an ad showed in Facebook.

We propose that low consumer experience in online store lead consumer to webrooming behavior. In this situation, the consumer sees product on internet and buy it in a physical store (Arora & Sahney, 2017). The focus of our work is to see this effect in online stores because this reason we will use touchpoints that consumer has with brand on internet environment. We will demonstrate some brand-consumer touchpoints that brand uses to increase consumer experience and avoid webrooming.

In online environment, the categories of touchpoints are same but kind of it is different (Kumar et al., 2016). Some researches like Anderl, Becker, et al (2016) and Wolny & Charoensuksai (2014) classified some touchpoints between brand and consumer on internet. In box 1, we show possibles contact points between them.

<b>Touchpoint</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Initiated By</b>	<b>Type of Touchpoint</b>	<b>Journey step</b>
<b>Type-in</b>	The search box, shortcut, bookmark	Consumer	Consumer-Owned	Prepurchase
<b>Search</b>	Google	Consumer	External-Owned	Prepurchase
<b>Price comparison</b>	Websites that aggregate prices	Consumer	Partner-owned/External Owned	Prepurchase
<b>Display</b>	Advertising, in a website, or social network	Brand	Brand-Owned	Prepurchase
<b>Retargeting</b>	Personal Ad	Brand	Brand-Owned/Partner Owned	Prepurchase
<b>Social Context</b>	Online reviews, Brand communities	Consumer	Social-Owned	Prepurchase/Postpurchase
<b>Newsletter</b>	E-mail marketing	Brand	Brand-Owned	Prepurchase/Postpurchase
<b>Social media</b>	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	Brand	Brand-Owned	Prepurchase/Postpurchase
<b>Affiliate</b>	Digital influencers, or partner websites	Brand/consumer	Partner-Owned	Prepurchase/Postpurchase

<b>Referrer</b>	Partners that show your product links in their websites	Brand/consumer	Partner-owned	Prepurchase/Postpurchase
<b>Online store</b>	Own online store, Partner Online Store	Brand/Partner	Brand- Owned/Partner Owned	Purchase

### **Box 1: Brand consumer touchpoints on internet**

Adapted from: (Anderl et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

These are most important touchpoints between brand and consumer on internet environment (Anderl et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), the brand need use any touchpoint to improve consumer experience and avoid webrooming. We propose that a combination of fails made in touchpoints can carry consumer to this behavior.

The brand has control over majority of touchpoints with consumer in online environment and can explore all touchpoints to increase consumer experience and consequently avoid webrooming behavior (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016; Anderl, Schumann, & Kunz, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

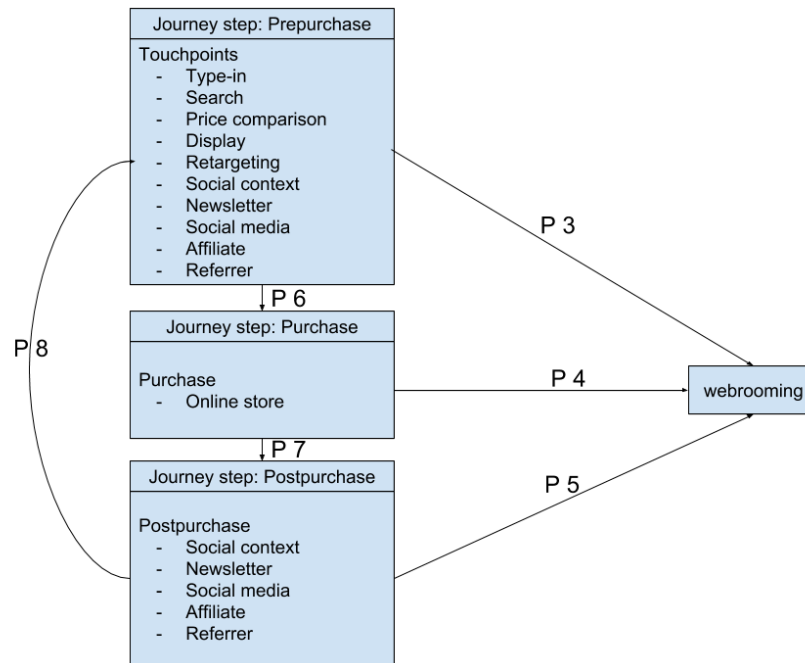
According to Lemon & Verhoef (2016), the brands can use different strategies to improve consumer experience. The structure and the resources influence the number of touchpoints with consumers (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016; Ieva & Ziliani, 2018). For example, some brands like Nike or Amazon, have more money and more touchpoints with consumers that another less recognized brand, is necessary to generate a good experience to consumer with existing touchpoints for any brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

To better explore this touchpoint we will use customer journey steps to make our Propositions, starting with Prepurchase, after, purchase and last, postpurchase. How was demonstrated, low consumer experience conduct them to webrooming. The brand needs to make some fails in more of one touchpoint to carry consumer to this behavior (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

### ***General model***

On figure 1, we show our general model and our last Propositions to understand better some antecedents of webrooming. Low experience generated in any step lead consumer to behave in this form. The brand can increase consumer experience in any step of consumer journey and avoid webrooming.

To understand better our Propositions and relations between variables we show in figure 1 our general framework demonstrating how consumer journey and touchpoints generating the consumer experience is related to webrooming.



**Figure 1: General Framework**

P: Propositions

Figure 1 shows the relationship between any journey step and its impact on webrooming behavior. In any steps is possible to see the elements that make consumer experience in all consumer journey and touchpoints needed to be improved to avoid webrooming. This model gives us support to make our last Propositions needed to be tested on next studies.

On Prepurchase step, consumer is searching for product, recognizing all brands, and considering all possibilities to buy it (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). In this stage is necessary to brand starts to creating a good experience to them (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The brand can make partners and improve the structure to offer good options and increase consumer experience on Prepurchase (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016).

On purchase stage consumer is making choice, ordering product, and doing payment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), in this stage is necessary to attempt to website structure and offer a good experience to consumer in this environment (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016). For example, page load time affect consumer attitudes on websites (Rose, Lees, & Meuter, 2011), consumers leave the page before they buy the product if time of page load is high (Rose et al., 2011).

In postpurchase stage consumer is using product, engaging with brand and is using some brand services (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), we propose that create a good experience to consumer is important to avoid webrooming behavior when they make a repeated purchase. Consumer experience made in one stage of consumer buying journey affect the experience in next purchase (Mattila & Wirtz, 2000). Postpurchase is also important to avoid webrooming

Looking at the effects of touchpoints on consumer experience created in customer journey we show next 3 Propositions of our study.

**P3: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Prepurchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a positive influence on webrooming behavior.**

**P4: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Purchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a positive influence on webrooming behavior.**

**P5: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Postpurchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a positive influence on webrooming behavior.**

Any stage of consumer journey affect consumer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and consequently affect consumer webrooming behavior. Managers need to increase consumer experience improving touchpoints to avoid these behaviors (Anderl, Schumann, et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

How was demonstrated by Mattila & Wirtz (2000), low experience in one stage affect consumer behavior in another stage. Lemon & Verhoef (2016) demonstrated that any stage of consumer journey affect consumer experience and conduct to webrooming behavior. Looking at their results we propose that:

**P6: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Prepurchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a negative influence on consumer experience in purchase stage, and increase the effect of webrooming in purchase stage.**

**P7: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Purchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a negative influence on consumer experience in postpurchase stage, and increase the effect of webrooming in postpurchase stage.**

**P8: Low consumer experience (vs high) generated on Postpurchase stage in consumer journey because poor touchpoints have a negative influence on consumer experience in pre-purchase stage, and increase the effect of webrooming in pre-purchase stage in a repeated buying.**

These propositions help us to understand better some antecedents of webrooming, in this case using consumer journey and experience generated on internet (Anderl, Schumann, et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Another important aspect is understanding the influence of any step of consumer journey (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase) on consumer behavior (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) our propositions aim to explain this behavior using webrooming

The objective of these Propositions is to test the effect of low consumer experience (vs high) generated in any step of consumer journey, using touchpoints and the impact of poor experience on consumer webrooming behavior.

In next sessions, we discuss some aspects of our research and some implications of our propositions to theory and to managers, some limitations and future research are discussed.



## *General discussion*

Increasing use of technology generate some changes in consumer behavior (van Noort & van Reijmersdal, 2019). One perspective demonstrated by Lemon & Verhoef (2016) is that consumer journey is affected by technology and brands need to pay attention in this point because of on internet the touchpoints between brand and consumer are different.

How was demonstrated by Anderl, Schumann, et al (2016) the touchpoints on internet affect consumer behavior and attitudes toward brand. We propose that one of these behaviors can be webrooming when someone looks at product on internet and buy it in a physical (Arora & Sahney, 2017).

Previous research demonstrated some antecedents of webrooming behavior, Arora & Sahney (2018b) showed that low trust on online stores carry consumer to behave in this manner, they also show that some consumers need to touch the product to buy it. Another antecedent explored by Arora & Sahney (2017b) is that some consumers like to go to physical store to buy.

Webrooming behavior is not good to brands, this behavior carry brand to use low prices to attract consumers and this strategy reduce brand profits (Anantaram Balakrishnan et al., 2014), our intention is to understand better this behavior and help brands to reduce it.

We intend to explore another antecedent that generate consumer webrooming behavior, low experience generated on consumer journey. We proposed that low consumer experience generated in consumer journey because poor contact between brand and consumer touchpoints carries consumer to webrooming behavior.

In our proposition 1, our intention is to explore the effect of consumer experience made in all consumer journey on webrooming behavior, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) propose that consumer experience is generated in whole journey because this reason is interesting to study the effect of entire model showed on figure one.

In their research Mattila & Wirtz (2000) showed that experience generated in one stage of journey affect another step, our proposition 2 aim to explain if low consumer experience generated in postpurchase step generate webrooming behavior in next purchase when consumer makes repeated purchases. These results will show us what is necessary to manager to focus on the three steps of consumer journey because all of them is important (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Our propositions 3, 4 and 5 is to test any step of consumer journey separated. According (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) all steps of journey is important, but some brand focus just in one or two stages. Our intention is to demonstrate the separated effects and show touchpoints that brand needs to improve to increase consumer experience in any step and avoid webrooming behavior.

Propositions 6, 7 and 8 is to test the influence of low experience generated in an antecedent step on subsequent step. We propose that low experience generated in one step can affect experience in subsequent step. Our intention is to demonstrate that is necessary to brand to have a balance between three steps. For example, if brand has a good experience on purchase step, but a poor experience on Prepurchase step the effect can be carried to purchase stage.

Understanding better webrooming antecedents managers can use some strategies to avoid this behavior that frequently happens on internet improving consumer experience through consumer journey using online touchpoints (Arora & Sahney, 2018b). In next session, we demonstrate managerial contributions of our research.

### ***Managerial contributions***

With increasing use of technology, some business focuses on online sells (Rowley, 2004) because this environment offers some advantages, like offer more information, reduce the costs of brand, etc (Rowley, 2004). The internet also offers more touchpoints between brand and consumer (Anderl, Schumann, et al., 2016).

In addition, with increasing use of technology some consumer's behavior also change (Anderl, Schumann, et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). One of this behavior is webrooming that frequently happens on internet when consumer sees product in an online store and buy it in a physical store (Arora & Sahney, 2017).

We proposed that this behavior occurs because of low experience generated in consumer journey. Lemon & Verhoef (2016) showed that consumer experience is build using existing touchpoints between brand and consumer. We also show some of these touchpoints in our research.

If our Propositions are correct, managers can use our research to improve consumer journey using online touchpoints (Anderl, Becker, et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and reduce consumer webrooming behavior. The managers can use showed touchpoints in this research as a guide and map the touchpoints of their brands and work to improve them.

How was demonstrated by Anantaram Balakrishnan et al (2014) webrooming behavior affect brand profits. After testing our Propositions managers can develop touchpoints and improve consumer experience and it increase their profits.

They can use our research to identify what are the most important steps of journey to spend money in the most important steps improving investment efficacy. The objective of exploring all steps is to demonstrate that is necessary to create a balance and distribute resources between three steps.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

We found two limitations to our work. The first one is that we just made Propositions, is necessary to test this Propositions to contribute more with theory and managers. Second limitation is that we used just webrooming behavior to make our propositions, there are other behavior that can happen because low experience, the showrooming. It happens when someone looks the product on physical store and buy it in online store (Mehra, Kumar, & Raju, 2013).

Next researches need to test our propositions to verify if webrooming behavior is generated by low consumer experience created in consumer journey, we think that experimental methodology can be used to manipulate bad experiences in any online touchpoint and measure these effects on consumer webrooming behavior.

There are some touchpoints between consumer and brand, how was demonstrated in box 1. Next researches can explore different combinations of these touchpoints to verify the best combination and offer some possibilities to brands develop their strategies in consumer journey using resources better and avoiding webrooming behavior.

We show in our model three antecedents of webrooming behavior, (Prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase), we suggest that next studies test it using structural equation model to see the size of these antecedents in our general model.

In our research, we propose that low consumer experience affect positively webrooming behavior. Future researches can explore some mediators like psychological mechanisms that affect webrooming (Arora & Sahney, 2018b) and some moderators like store characteristics or individual characteristics (Fernández et al., 2018).

Other research can explore the effect of low consumer experience generated in a physical store on consumer showrooming behavior, what happens when someone looks at product in a physical store and buy it an online store (Mehra et al., 2013), making our research we found some evidences that this behavior can occur in physical environment. Is necessary to explore offline touchpoints and how they affect the consumer experience on the offline store.

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