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My experience of laptop purchase

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The case *My Experience of Laptop Purchase* was prepared for the class discussion. This case is not intended to serve as an endorsement or to show effective or ineffective handling of decision or business process. This case is an experience-based case of a real-life consumer.

It was 5 May, and Natasha appeared tense, as she had to prepare an important presentation on her desktop to submit to the top management of her college. Her appointment as a permanent member of staff would depend on this presentation. Suddenly, halfway through, her desktop turned off.

As the desktop had no backup facility, Natasha knew that all her data must have been lost. She sounded frustrated and angry while discussing the situation with her cousin Nimisha, whom she had contacted for help.

Her mother, who overheard the entire conversation, was perplexed and asked Natasha, "Why do you want to invest in a laptop when you already have a desktop?"

Natasha had been using her desktop for more than five years, but lately it had been giving her trouble. In the past few months, the desktop had started to switch off abruptly without a warning and this had become a regular phenomenon during the past couple of weeks.

Getting her desktop repaired was a real headache. The repairman at the nearby PC service centre was often not at the centre and Natasha would have no other option but to carry the bulky CPU on her scooter to get it repaired at another service centre located 30 km away from her home.

The thought of purchasing a laptop had been occurring to Natasha for a year, starting from the time when her colleague Richa bought Acer's Getaway for INR20,843. Natasha had to postpone the idea due to the recent purchase of a new Android phone worth INR12,500 from her own savings. This was the first purchase she made after starting her new job following her graduation.

The very next day was Satyam's, Natasha's cousin, birthday. At the party, Satyam noticed Natasha sitting alone in a corner while others were enjoying the party. Satyam spoke to his cousin, "You seem tense and disturbed! Is everything ok, sis?"

Natasha burst into tears, "I'm unable to work on my presentation as my desktop crashed yesterday and I am really worried!", she said. "I am also not sure whether getting it repaired would solve my problem as the desktop needed a replacement that would take time. I cannot work on the presentation in cyber café or any other place as the presentation involved data that is voluminous and confidential."

"Relax, sis!", Satyam tried to pacify her. "Why don't you buy a laptop? I would suggest you speak to Yash from whom I purchased a laptop as a gift for my wife Radhika last month."

Natasha made up her mind to buy a laptop without further delay from the money she had saved to-date. She wanted one that would cost her less than INR30,000, with a 15-inch screen with a sleek look, 3 GHz with 2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc and a third-generation processor.

Next day, Natasha met Yash the dealer. His shop was located in the commercial centre of the city. However, Natasha seemed unimpressed at the ambience and the display space of the shop. While she was busy looking for different brands, the salesman approached her.

"I need a laptop at a price of less than INR30,000", Natasha said, "with a fast processor, 3 GHz, 2GB RAM [. . .] [. . .] with a 15-inch size screen [. . .] [. . .] [. . .] should not be bulky".

The salesman briefed her on the attributes of different brands of laptops. For more information regarding the selection, refer to Exhibit 1.

Natasha half-heartedly inquired about the brands, as all the laptops the salesman showed her appeared ordinary and bulky. She felt uncomfortable about inspecting the laptops, as the store was small and cramped and hardly had enough space for proper display and inspection.

"Can I have the catalogue of the brands?", Natasha requested Yash.

Yash quickly scanned through the document file to search for the catalogue of different brands. He felt a little awkward being unable to locate the updated version of the catalogue and tried to manage the situation by briefing the features and specifications of different brands. Natasha left the showroom unconvinced and undecided.

The same evening, she decided to seek the advice of her friend Bharat, the most tech-savvy person she knew, who seemed to have lot of knowledge about laptop brands.

"Natasha", Bharat said, "I think, HPs would be a good brand as per your requirement. I would advise you to visit Lotus and physically verify the models available before making a final choice".

The very next day, Natasha went to Lotus, a reputed electronics supermarket 15 km away from her home. The supermarket stocked a wide assortment of electronic items at a reasonable price compared to the market price.

She was overwhelmed by the assortments and the elaborate display of various brands of laptops, tablets and notepads. Natasha moved through the aisles, inspecting several brands of laptops displayed on the shelf.

She suddenly stopped and lifted an Acer Gateway laptop and enquired about it to the salesman.

"There are better brands that I can show you madam", the salesman said enthusiastically.

"Which brand would you recommend, sir, that would cost me less than INR30,000?", Natasha asked.

"Sony's E15 series with latest features, Windows 8, price ranging from INR30,500 to INR32,500 would be the best choice". The salesman explained the technical specifications by referring to the latest catalogue of Sony with the features and MRP (refer to Exhibit 2). Natasha left the store undecided.

Meanwhile, Natasha kept asking her colleagues at her workplace about different brands of laptops. Based on the suggestion of her colleague Richa, Natasha browsed a few websites to compare the prices for the best deal.

Sony E15 series model was priced at INR32,990 on mirchimart.com, INR32,990 on ebay.com, INR31,899 on nookstore.com, INR31,340 on cyber world systems.com and INR34,990 on daily bazaar.com, while the official Sony website quoted a price of INR32,990.

The next day, Natasha again went to Lotus to reconfirm their price. The salesman showed her a Sony E15133CN, a Lenovo and a Dell Inspiron with third-generation core processor, 2 GB RAM and 500 GB hard disc with MRP ranging between INR27,000 and 29,000. In the retail outlet, she was tempted to buy the Dell for INR29,000 that was well within her budget.

On her way home, Natasha made up her mind to reconfirm from Nimisha, her cousin, who had assisted her in the decision of buying a Samsung smartphone few months before.

"Natasha, I don't have much knowledge about laptops", said Nimisha, "I would suggest you to check from Atul your Jiju (brother-in-law) who recently bought a Sony laptop".

Natasha called Atul. "My Sony laptop has never been a problem to me and the processor is good", Atul told her. "Dell and Sony are both good but Sony has a longer battery life compared to Dell. I would recommend you to go for Sony".

"Should I go for a pirated version, as it would cost me less?", she asked him. "Natasha I would suggest you to buy from Lotus as it offers good deal for laptop with original operating system", he replied.

Natasha felt convinced and finally decided to buy a Sony laptop with an original operating system from Lotus.

As per the family rituals, she decided to buy the laptop the very next day. All the while Natasha had been contemplating about how to dispose of her desktop, which was occupying a lot of space.

Early the next day, Natasha got ready. She did not own a credit card and wanted to pay in cash, as using her debit card would cost her extra due to service charges. On her way to Lotus, she withdrew money from the nearby ATM.

Natasha paid INR30,500 after a cash discount of INR2,000 for a white Sony Vaio E15133CN. She got a manual, a charger, a Sony Vaio bag, a one-year warranty card and free antivirus software for the following six months from Net protector as well as a special deal from Lotus. On her way back home, she felt excited about her decision and the deal.

In the evening, however, when she switched on her laptop and inserted her Reliance 3G data card, the laptop did not detect the card. She tried inserting it into another USB port but that also did not detect the card. She immediately called the Lotus helpdesk and explained the problem to the sales representative.

The representative requested her to bring the laptop to Lotus. Without any delay, Natasha rushed to Lotus and met the representative and handed over the laptop.

When Natasha inquired about the problem, the representative replied reluctantly that he had to inspect the laptop to identify the exact problem and suggested her to leave the laptop for inspection.

Natasha was worried and asked how long it would take to fix the problem.

The representative, who by then had gotten busy attending to another customer, raised his voice and said, "Look, madam, it would take few days to fix it as we need to first identify and ascertain the problem". On further inspection of the laptop, the representative in a hesitant tone said, "Madam, it could be due to hardware or compatibility or due to the antivirus installed in the laptop".

Natasha felt dejected about the entire episode, as she contemplated whether she would be able to complete her presentation. Only three days were left before her submission was due and she had two options: to return home, carry the bulky CPU to the service station 30 km away from her home and wait until the service repairman confirmed the exact problem with the desktop. She was not sure how long would it take to repair the desktop that she had been originally planning to dispose of. The other option left was to leave her laptop at Lotus and hope that the representative would be able to resolve the problem within the manageable time.

By then, it was late evening when she came out of the store. She had to decide quickly about the next course of action, whether to immediately rush to the repair centre with the desktop to fix the problem for the time being or to leave the laptop at Lotus and wait until the problem gets fixed. She wished the representative had been more candid in assuring her about fixing the problem on a priority basis.

Exhibit 1

Table EI	Different brands of laptops and their specifications
Brand	*Specifications*
Asus Dual Core	Third-generation dual core, 2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc
Asus Celeron Dual Core	Celeron second-generation, 2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc
Asus Core i3	Core i3 processor, 2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc
Acer Gateway with second-generation processor	2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc
Acer Gateway with third-generation processor	Core i3, 2 GB RAM, 500 GB hard disc

Exhibit 2

Table EII	Sony model	
Black, White, Pink		Black
INR32,990*		INR30,990
Third-Gen Intel Core ™		Second-Gen Intel Core ™
i3-3120 M Processor 2.5 GHz		i2-2328 M Processor 2.2 GHz
Windows 8		Windows 8
	39.4 cm	
	15.5 inch	
	1366 × 768 Display	
Intel HD 4000		Intel HD 3000
	2 GB DDR3 SDRAM	
	500 GB – DVD Super Multi Drive	
	Battery – 4 hours	
	2.7 kg	
	Wi-Fi and Bluetooth	

Note: *INR equivalent to US$66.50 as of November 2015

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