



Motivation for online impulse buying: A two-factor theory perspective



Louis Yi-Shih Lo^a, Sheng-Wei Lin^{b,*}, Li-Yi Hsu^c

^a Department of Management Information Systems, College of Management, Central Taiwan University of Science and Technology, No. 666, Buzih Road, Taichung City 40601, Taiwan, ROC

^b Department of Computer Science and Information Management, School of Business, Soochow University, No. 56 Kueiyang Street, Section 1, Taipei 100, Taiwan, ROC

^c Department of Information Technology, SinoPac Bank, 3F., No.151, Sec. 6, Civic Blvd., Xinyi Dist., Taipei 10566, Taiwan, ROC

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ABSTRACT

Impulse buying accounts for a large proportion of consumer shopping behavior in the bricks-and-mortar retail market. Online retailers also expect to profit from impulse buying. It is therefore interesting and beneficial to investigate the design elements of online stores and the sales promotion stimuli that e-retailers can use to either arouse consumers' desire or decrease their self-control to evoke their purchase impulses. This study seeks to explicitly identify the factors associated with online store design and sales promotion stimuli that most affect online impulse buying behavior throughout the consumer decision-making process. Drawing on the two-factor theory, it successfully identifies the hygiene and motivation factors that trigger online impulse buying. The questionnaire responses of 239 valid respondents revealed that most of the hygiene factors are associated with the design of online stores, and all of the motivation factors are forms of sales promotion stimuli that effectively facilitate online impulse buying and present utilitarian or hedonic benefits to consumers. This study also identifies the most effective sales promotion stimuli and offers a comprehensive checklist for Web designers. Moreover, the distribution of motivation and hygiene factors for each stage of the EKB model is uneven, and some stages include only hygiene factors. The findings of this study demonstrate that the triggers of consumers' online shopping behavior do not always apply to online impulse buying, and have important implications for impulse buying research and practice.

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1. Introduction

The e-commerce marketplace is growing rapidly. Forrester Research reported that e-retail sales in the US will increase from 334 billion dollars in 2015–480 billion in 2019 (Mulpuru, Boutan, Johnson, Wu, & Naparstek, 2015), with a compound annual growth rate of 10 percent, and the market share of e-retail sales will reach approximately 10 percent. The rapid growth of the online retailing market also indicates that many new retailers are planning to participate in e-commerce, creating plenty of competition in each market segment. Understanding the online behavior of consumers has therefore become a cornerstone for e-retailers, enabling them to strengthen their competitiveness or increase profits. Revenues are directly related to online shopping behavior, so this is obviously of great interest to e-retailers. Online shopping is an integrated man-

ifestation of rational and irrational behavior (i.e., online impulse buying), with irrational online shopping behavior accounting for a large share of e-retailer revenue. Online impulse buying is a manifestation of consumers' failure to control shopping impulses when encountering consumptive stimuli. In other words, consumers are torn between the desires evoked by consumptive stimuli and self-control (Baumeister, 2002, p. 671). Identifying the key factors that evoke online impulse buying is the focus of this study.

Self-control is an inherent individual ability, but desire, environmental stimuli, or continual decision-making can erode an individual's stamina. If the capability for self-control is depleted, various types of impulse behavior are demonstrated, such as impulse buying (Baumeister, 2002). Environmental stimuli can deplete self-control stamina, and can be represented by the design elements of physical or online stores, although these types of shopping environment differ. In a physical store, stimuli can be designed to affect the five senses (i.e., vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) to induce the desire to shop, while in an online store, environmental stimuli are restricted to affecting vision or hearing. Exploring the factors of online store design that heighten consumers' desire

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: 106928@ctust.edu.tw (L.Y.-S. Lo), swlin@csim.scu.edu.tw (S.-W. Lin), justice1264@gmail.com (L.-Y. Hsu).

to shop, or weaken their self-control capability and evoke online impulse buying, is therefore interesting and enlightening. These factors may have an effect throughout the decision-making process. Identifying the online store design factors relevant to the different stages of consumers' decision-making processes can enable e-retailers to use them effectively and induce online impulse buying.

Online impulse buying is also associated with e-retailers' sales promotion stimuli (Dawson & Kim, 2010), which can therefore be regarded as another factor influencing this behavior. The association between sales promotion stimuli and an increase in consumers' purchasing impulses, or a reduction in their self-control capability, is a subject worthy of further investigation that would be beneficial to the research field and to online store administrators. Product characteristics are also factors that can induce online impulse buying, but these are primarily controlled by manufacturers rather than e-retailers. Therefore, online store design factors and sales promotion stimuli are the focus of this study, as e-retailers can only manipulate consumers' sense of vision and thus encourage impulse buying through these methods.

Based on the two-factor theory of job motivation (Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1993), this study classifies online store design and sales promotion stimuli, which affect consumers' online impulse buying, into hygiene and motivation factors. We assumed there is a consistency between the motives of e-retailers when encouraging impulse buying and those of organizations when encouraging employees to work harder. According to Herzberg's theory, hygiene factors are the basic conditions used to judge whether consumers will remain in an online store and whether the self-control of consumers is reduced due to purchase uncertainty, while motivation factors are critical in deciding whether to purchase from a particular online store, and in enhancing the purchase impulse of consumers. In this study, two-factor theory is used to categorize online store design and sales promotion stimuli in online impulse buying.

We have identified three research areas that deserve further attention. The first is the relationship between online store design and a combination of planned and unplanned consumer purchase behavior (e.g., Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2010; Lai, Chong, Ismail, & Tong, 2014; Liang & Lai, 2002; Song, Baker, Lee, & Wetherbe, 2012), where unplanned purchase behavior has been identified as being relatively irrational, and evoked by external stimuli. We argue that the triggers of consumers' online shopping behavior do not always apply to online impulse buying. Second, investigations into the effects of external stimuli on consumers' impulse buying classify the stimuli according to the product characteristics or the shopping environment, without reference to the consumer decision-making process, especially the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell model (hereafter abbreviated as the EKB model). Thus, the distribution of external stimuli throughout the stages of the consumer decision-making process is unknown, and therefore designing specific stimulus to evoke consumers' impulses or reduce their self-control at each stage is not possible (e.g., Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004; Parboteeah, Valacich, & Wells, 2009; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). Third, research has found a positive relationship between sales promotion stimuli and consumers' purchase behavior, but does not explore how the sales promotion stimuli of various consumer benefits differ in their effects on impulse buying. The objectives of this study are to sort the stimuli affecting online impulse buying across the stages of the consumer decision-making process, and to differentiate the factors (i.e., motivation or hygiene) using the two-factor theory, with the intention of providing e-retailers with valuable suggestions. These objectives will help to answer the following research questions.

1. Which elements of online store design are hygiene or motivation factors that affect online impulse buying?

2. Which sales promotion stimuli are hygiene or motivation factors that affect online impulse buying?

3. How are hygiene and motivation factors in online impulse buying distributed across the stages of the consumer decision-making process?

Our study can benefit e-retailers by providing a better understanding of the antecedents of consumers' online impulse buying. First, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has examined the influence of website design factors and sales promotion stimuli on online impulse buying using the two-factor theory. By classifying 31 factors as either motivation or hygiene across each stage of the EKB model, their influence on online impulse buying can be understood. Second, this study includes nine sales promotion stimuli and ranks their effects on online impulse buying, which identifies the most effective sales promotion stimuli and offers a comprehensive checklist enabling web designers to organize the stimuli to encourage online impulse buying. Third, the distribution of motivation and hygiene factors for each stage of the EKB model is not even, and some stages only include hygiene factors. Our findings indicate that further effort is required to discover the motivators that reinforce online impulse buying at various stages.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. We review the relevant literature on the factors of online store design and sales promotion stimuli that motivate impulse buying or undermine the self-control of consumers. The research methodology and data analysis are then discussed. Finally, we present the results and discuss the implications.

2. Literature review

Literature review began with the definition of online impulse buying, and then based on six stages of the EKB model, identified online store design elements and sales promotion stimuli associated with online purchase intention along the references. Then, we introduced two-factor theory of job motivation and borrowed such concept to infer that the motivator can induce consumers' online impulse buying, and hygiene factors can reduce the dissuasive effect caused by uncertain information. Such inference drawing from two-factor theory formulate the statements listed on 3.1 Research Design, which underpinned the subjects' judgment on motivation and hygiene factors.

2.1. Online impulse buying

Impulse buying, frequently categorized simply as the behavior of unplanned buying, was classified into four more detailed categories by Stern (1962): pure impulse buying, reminder impulse buying, suggestion impulse buying, and planned impulse buying. Pure impulse buying is the behavior of immediate buying through novelty or escape purchasing. Reminder impulse buying occurs when a shopper sees an item or recalls an advertisement about it and remembers that their stock of the item at home is exhausted or low, which sparks the impulse purchase. Suggestion impulse buying occurs when a shopper sees a product and visualizes a need for it, even if he or she has no previous knowledge of the product. Planned impulse buying occurs when a consumer has planned a specific purpose in advance, but focuses on promotions or discounts. These four different types provide a practical guide to identifying impulse buying, but conceptual definitions are lacking.

Rook (1987) regarded impulse buying as a different phenomenon from unplanned or contemplative buying. He defined it as the situation in which a consumer buys a product in a moment of sudden, forceful, and continual impulsiveness. This pleasant and complex impulse can trigger emotional conflicts. Impulse buying often occurs without regard for consequences (Rook, 1987), fre-

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