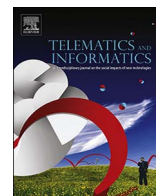




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# What drives impulse buying behaviors in a mobile auction? The perspective of the Stimulus-Organism-Response model

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## ABSTRACT

The prevalence of smart devices and wireless networks has steered online traders toward mobile devices, which has promoted the rapid development of auction platforms in the mobile commerce market. Past studies have shown that about 40% of all online expenditures are impulse purchases, and that this proportion may have increased as mobile commerce has become more prevalent. However, only a few researchers have used the context of mobile auctions to explore the impulsive buying behaviors of consumers. Therefore, our study selects the mobile auction platform to explore how situational factors affect impulsive buying behavior. We integrate the S-O-R model, impulsivity traits and other external variables to establish our research model and hypotheses. Our results show that the personality factors of an impulsive buying tendency, normative evaluation, and positive affect are key determinants of impulse buying, while ubiquity, ease of use, information exchange, discounted price, and scarcity are important precursors. In addition, gender and platform categorizations are also used to classify the sample to determine the differences between groups defined by these classifications. Our results are useful to both researchers and mobile auction operators.

## 1. Introduction

In this era of accelerated growth in e-commerce, the expansion of mobile networks has been changing marketing patterns and consumer behaviors. Mobile devices allow operators to provide consumers with the fun of shopping and to offer them app-only promotional campaigns at any time. Thus, consumers can shop wherever and whenever they desire, giving rise to impulse buying as well as mobile shopping behaviors that cause consumers to buy more frequently and to purchase more. According to the PwC's "Total Retail Survey 2017," online shopping via computer is declining steadily as mobile shopping increases (PwC, 2017). Reportedly, 47% of shoppers around the world have owned or intend to own a wearable device, and 37% of shoppers have completed a health and beauty purchase via a mobile channel. MasterCard's 2017 survey of mobile shopping behavior showed that more than half of Taiwanese consumers (51.2%) had shopped on their mobile devices over the past 3 months, and that the growth of mobile shopping in Taiwan was the largest in the Chinese-speaking community. The most frequently downloaded apps are Yahoo Shopping (27.1%) and Shopee (21.5%). This shows that mobile auctions provide consumers with more channels for doing businesses with others. With a few simple clicks, anyone can bid against other consumers, and the emotions derived therefrom can be considered as a feature of the auction platform (Lee et al., 2009; Stafford et al., 2006) to which consumers prone to impulse buying are easily drawn (To et al., 2007).

Past studies and surveys have indicated that external environmental factors affect the personal traits and emotional status of

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consumers. Consumers assess their impulse buying behaviors based on these factors, thus resulting in their behaviors being affected by environmental factors (Verhagen and van Dolen, 2011; Liu et al., 2013). In addition to the environmental factors of online platforms, various kinds of marketing stimuli within the consumption environment (e.g., discounts, hunger marketing strategies, and all kinds of incentives) are all significant factors that can induce impulse buying behaviors (Campbell and Diamond, 1990; Dawson and Kim, 2009). Therefore, based on past studies, this study focuses on environmental factors and promotions to explore how environmental stimuli affect impulse buying behaviors. We adopt the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model to investigate the effects of external environmental factors. The S-O-R model conceptualizes consumers' responses to consumption environments, allowing researchers to better understand the complicated process behind consumers' responses and decisions (Verhagen and van Dolen, 2011; Liu et al., 2013).

Although the booming e-commerce market has given rise to impulse buying, few studies have explored impulse buying via mobile devices. Hence, academic and managerial interest has increased in regard to the factors that promote impulse buying among consumers in e-commerce environments. This study applies the structures of past studies on impulse buying behaviors to online shopping environments in the context of mobile auctions. We also combine the features of the mobile shopping environment and promotional strategies to examine how environmental stimuli and consumers' personal factors influence impulse buying behaviors. This study focuses on consumers who have used mobile auctions, and addresses the following questions regarding consumers' impulse buying behaviors:

- Do the environmental factors of mobile auctions markedly influence consumers' positive affect?
- Do promotional campaigns for mobile auctions markedly influence consumers' normative assessment and positive affect?
- Does an inclination toward impulse buying behaviors markedly influence the consumer's normative assessment and positive affect?
- Does an inclination toward impulse buying behaviors, normative assessment, and positive effect markedly influence the consumer's impulse buying behaviors?

## 2. Literature review & hypotheses

### 2.1. Mobile auctions

With the popularity of smart devices and mobile networks, the number of people surfing the Internet on mobile devices has also been on the rise. Online transactions have started to shift from personal computers to mobile devices, and as the number of mobile-commerce users gradually exceeds that of e-commerce users, mobile-commerce becomes mainstream. This has created a large number of mobile-commerce markets. To take advantage of this trend, many online auctions have started to set up mobile-commerce applications, giving rise to C2C mobile auctions.

In their proposed structure for building mobile platforms, Liu and Pham (2016) adopted the 4 key factors for success in mobile-commerce operation suggested by Xu and Gutiérrez (2006). Widely used in studies regarding mobile-commerce (Tojib and Tsarenko, 2012), these factors are: (1) convenience, (2) ubiquity, (3) ease of use, and (4) trust.

In recent years, as mobile-commerce has matured in Taiwan, many new mobile-commerce operators have begun to provide fast and easy transaction services to consumers with Internet-connected mobile devices. Therefore, many users have shifted from traditional online shopping websites to mobile auctions. To get a share of the market, many operators have also entered the fray to expand their sales channels. Often, at the beginning of operations, no slotting fees or transaction fees were charged, so floods of users were drawn to such platforms. However, once operation patterns were set up and their platforms were operating stably, mobile-commerce operators started charging sellers transaction fees as a source of income. These signs show that mobile-commerce has become an important development direction for future e-commerce. Auction operations of this kind have been referred to as traditional online auctions. In contrast, the term "native mobile auction" refers to an operation in which the operator bypassed the process of setting up a traditional website and introduced a mobile app to the market directly.

### 2.2. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model was proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in the early days of the environmental psychology field. Many studies have used it to interpret impulse buying behaviors. The S-O-R model includes three aspects: the environment or stimulus (S) that triggers consumer behaviors and responses, the organism (O) that responds, and the actual response (R). This model aims to integrate individual responses to explain people's perceptions and emotions regarding external stimuli, and the positive or negative behaviors that are generated subsequently. Adopting the S-O-R model in studying consumer behaviors helps differentiate environmental stimuli and consumers' internal and external behaviors.

With online shopping on the rise, the S-O-R model has become the most commonly used basis for researching online impulse buying. Many studies have also applied this model to explore how the properties of online shopping websites affect consumer behaviors. Eroglu et al. (2001) were the first to apply environmental psychology to study online consumer behaviors. They showed that the stimulus factors and the ambience of online stores affect the emotional and cognitive status of consumers, thereby triggering consumer behaviors. Manganari et al. (2009) also showed that consumers' perceptions of online stores evoke emotions and affect their behaviors. Therefore, the higher the quality of the environment provided by the online store, the more online consumer behaviors can be triggered. Jones et al. (2003), Kim and Lennon (2012) and Ariningsih et al. (2016) proved that specific

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