Consumer's Internet shopping anxiety and coping behavior in e-tailing service

Abstract

In this paper, we introduce a new factor we dubbed "Internet shopping anxiety" that influences the behaviors of online consumers while engaging in e-tailing services. We use coping behavior to explain the habits of online consumer when they avail themselves of e-tailing services. Then, e-tailing services are divided into two components: service and system. The study uses e-tailing service quality and trust in website (system) as moderated factors of Internet shopping anxiety to explore and empirically validate the relationships between Internet shopping anxiety and coping behavior of online consumer under e-retailing context.

Conceptualization

Although reducing the difficulty associated with searching for products and a reduction in transaction costs are clearly beneficial, a number of consumers have still eschewed online shopping and returned to the real world (Gupta, Su, and Walter, 2004). There must be a reason for this. Previously, researchers discovered clues within consumer evaluations of e-tailing services, dealing with aspects such as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Martín and Camarero, 2008). However, these clues failed to adequately explain such behavior. In this study, we suspect that the emotions of online consumers while using e-tailing services might provide additional insight (Ma and Wang, 2009).

The studies of consumer's emotions, especially negative emotions including anger, hate, resistance, fear and anxiety, have developed for a long time (Menon and Dubé, 2007). Among these, anxiety is the most widely studied (Norris, Pauli, and Bray, 2007). Anxiety is often discussed in the literature on consumer behavior (Viswanathan, Rosa, and Harris, 2005), computer use (Durndell and Haag, 2002), and Internet use (Joiner, Brosnan, Duffield, Gavin, and Maras, 2007), but it has been relatively understudied in the context of e-tailing service.

In this study, we try to discuss the effect of anxiety on e-tailing service adoption. Internet shopping anxiety, or the negative emotion that results from an individual's experiences of e-tailing service adoption in particular, may be an important factor to explain the online consumer's emotion in e-tailing service usage. In this study, we introduce Internet shopping anxiety as a new factor that reflects the online consumer's emotion during adopting e-tailing service.

Anxiety has been one of the major research topics in the field of consumer behavior for a long time. In previous studies of anxiety, consumers' anxiety and their coping behaviors are of great concern (Duhachek, 2005). Coping behavior is a reactive variable to deal with situations in which people feel threatened or stressful. In this study, coping behavior helps us understand online consumers' response to threatening or stressful situations in e-tailing environment and such responses influence online consumers' intention to use e-tailing service.

Coping behavior is essential for e-tailing service adoption decision because it bridges the gap between online consumer's Internet shopping anxiety and e-tailing service adoption. Therefore, we use coping behavior to explain an online consumer's reaction behavior when he or she adopts e-tailing service. By this way, we try to make a contribution in discovering what decides an online consumer's e-tailing service adoption.

The purpose of the present study is threefold. First, this study identifies factors that affect online consumers' coping behavior in e-tailing environment. Second, we define Internet shopping anxiety and distinguish it from Internet anxiety. Finally, we examine the relationships between Internet shopping anxiety and coping behavior in e-tailing environment.

Method

Online consumer's Internet shopping anxiety is measured by adapting a three-item scale of Internet anxiety in the work of Thatcher, Loughry, Lim, and McKnight (2007) to specifying context of shopping through e-tailing service in Thatcher et al. (2007)'s Internet application. The three constructs of coping behavior are assessed using the scales developed by Duhachek (2005). Active coping is measured with fourteen items. Expressive support seeking is assessed with thirteen items. The scale for avoidance is consisted of seven items.

This study adopts a 21-item scale which is originally developed by Jun, Yang, and Kim (2004), as a measure of e-tailing service quality. Online consumers' web trust is measured using a four-item scale developed by Thatcher et al. (2007). All items of the measurement use a 7-point Likert scale. Each item range from 1 "I do not agree at all" to 7 "I totally agree".

The hypotheses of the study will be examined using a multiple hierarchical regression analysis, with the three different coping behaviors as the dependent variables. The multiple hierarchical regression analysis is performed with two steps. To test the main effect, Internet shopping anxiety is entered in step 1 as an independent variable. We then enter two interaction variables in step 2 to examine their effects.

Major findings

The study may provide insights on online consumer's emotion and behavior issues. First, this study is the first empirical research investigating the role of Internet shopping anxiety. The study identifies a more specific dimension of Internet anxiety in the Internet shopping context. Internet shopping anxiety is different from Internet anxiety. Internet shopping anxiety comes from specific shopping-related Internet application usage, happens at the moment of shopping, and is an unstable feeling that strongly affects people in short period.

Second, our finding suggests that online consumers in different kinds of Internet shopping anxiety adopt different kinds of coping behaviors to respond to the situations.

Third, the study's findings show different relationships between Internet shopping

anxiety and coping behaviors across various e-tailing service quality. The study offers some possibilities to understand the cognitive factor which might be a pre-indicator of coping behavior by the e-tailing service quality in addition to the emotion factor.

For online retailers and sellers who are interested in e-tailing environment, the study also makes practical suggestions. To help create better experience in the consumer shopping process through e-tailing service, retailers could provide online consumers more accurate, prompt and secure services. Retailers should do their best jobs to offer their consumers personalized services in the e-tailing environment with non-human interactions. All the suggestions would help retailers make their consumers feel better during e-tailing service adoption processes and further affect consumers' decision in using their e-tailing service again.

For online consumers, the findings can help them understand their emotions more and thus adjust their emotions. Then, the finding suggests online consumers choose suitable or trustable retailers to make online consumptions. The finding also offers online consumers some principles to evaluate retailer's e-tailing service quality.

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