Investigation on the Factors Determining Consumers’ Use of Online Intermediated Shopping (OIS): A Behavioral Intention Perspective

Wei Zhang, Department of Internal Control, SuZhou New District Economic Development Group Corporation, Suzhou, Jiangsu, China

Xue Yang, Department of Marketing and Electronic Business, Nanjing University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Quansheng Wang, Department of Marketing and Electronic Business, Nanjing University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Chengde Zheng, Department of Marketing and Electronic Business, Nanjing University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Choon Ling Sia, Department of Information Systems, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

ABSTRACT

While consumers have increasingly exploited online intermediated shopping (OIS) to facilitate electronic shopping through the assistance of online intermediaries, many remain hesitant to do so for various perceptual reasons. This paper thus applies agency theory, the theory of planned behavior (TPB), perceived risk, and trust, to propose a research model for consumers’ behavioral intention in using OIS. Empirical data was collected through a survey and analyzed using regression models. Results showed that constructs of perceived benefit, trust, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are related to behavioral intention to engage in OIS; consumer experience has a moderating role. Theoretically speaking, this study enriches and extends the original TPB by relating it to the emerging phenomenon of OIS behavior from the consumer’s perspective. This study also offers important practical implications for OIS intermediaries and platforms that aim to better attract and serve existing and potential consumers.

Keywords: Behavioral Intentions, Confidence, Online Intermediated Shopping (OIS), Perceived Benefit, Perceived Risk, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Trust

DOI: 10.4018/joeuc.2015010104
INTRODUCTION

As the popularity of online shopping rose among Chinese consumers over the last decade, a new type of online shopping, online intermediated shopping (OIS), emerged and quickly became popular among many pioneering online consumers. Online intermediated shopping (OIS) in this research refers to the practice that consumers use online platforms to search for product information and decide on appropriate intermediaries to help purchase the designated products. OIS helps consumers search online for information about intermediaries and find a suitable intermediary to buy a specified product. It is thus a specific online shopping mode that involves the intervention, assistance, and facilitation of an individual or organizational online intermediary who acts as an agent or middleman to help acquire particular products originally unavailable to the target consumers—e.g., those sold in different countries. Compared to traditional offline intermediated shopping and online shopping without intermediaries, OIS attracts consumers because of its advantages in terms of convenience, global access, competitive prices, and product knowledge. Online shopping intermediaries help consumers access the desired products (e.g., special local products, newly released electronics, or limited-edition collections) at the lowest possible prices based on their particular product knowledge, understanding of the market, and unique shopping channels. As a commission, the intermediary charges a small proportion of the product cost or a fixed price. OIS can be based on various platforms, including large community forums for specific consumer sub-groups, E-commerce websites (e.g., Taobao Global Purchase), or professional OIS websites (e.g., Yide in China, which mainly targets particular high-end consumer groups). Overseas OIS spending in Mainland China is expected to reach RMB74.4b in 2013, 54% higher than in 2012 (China E-Business Research Center, 2013).

However, despite the salient benefits, the indirect process of using intermediaries has some negative aspects, such as nonguaranteed shopping results and a lack of legal protection. Such uncertainties seem to be a critical obstacle to using OIS services for many Chinese consumers, who remain reluctant to engage in OIS activities. However, despite OIS’s mounting popularity, there is a lack of systematic investigation of the potential factors that may hamper its development from the consumer’s perspective. Thus, this paper attempts to answer the following research question:

What factors may influence consumers’ behavioral intention to conduct OIS, particularly in the Chinese market context?

An earlier report on Chinese consumers’ online shopping behavior indicated that the online shopping environment’s low trustworthiness and poor safety were the main reasons preventing users from purchasing online (CNNIC, 2010). These issues are no longer serious concerns, as online shopping activities have surged in recent years, so that the majority of consumers are now familiar with online shopping at major e-commerce websites. However, trust and risk should still be considered as critical factors likely to influence consumers’ OIS propensity in the Chinese context, given the unique characteristics of OIS that involve the intervention and assistance of individual/organizational shopping intermediaries. Engagement with these intermediaries may pose significant concerns involving trust, risk, and confidence for consumers who have already adopted general online shopping, and the effects of these key factors may vary. Hence, in this study, we apply agency theory and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the underlying theoretical backbone and incorporate specific factors of perceived risk, trust, and confidence in control to develop a research model of consumers’ behavioral intention to use OIS. We discuss the relationship between perceived benefits, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and consumers’ OIS intentions. By relating these to the unique OIS phenomenon, we develop a research model that extends existing theories.
Usability Optimization of a Military Training System
Roberto K. Champney, Christina M. Kokini, Kay M. Stanney and Stephanie Lackey
(2013). *Teaching Cases Collection* (pp. 355-377).
[wwww.igi-global.com/chapter/usability-optimization-military-training-system/76808?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/usability-optimization-military-training-system/76808?camid=4v1a)

The Role of Expertise in the Evaluation of Computing Architectures:
Exploring the Decision Models of Expert and Novice IS Managers
[wwww.igi-global.com/article/role-expertise-evaluation-computing-architectures/3840?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/role-expertise-evaluation-computing-architectures/3840?camid=4v1a)