

A Risky Sense of Comfort? How Device Type Affects Decision Quality and Product Returns in E-Commerce

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Abstract

Due to the global surge in mobile commerce, not only have online sales increased, but so have product returns. These trends raise the question of whether customers' use of different devices affects their return behavior. First, an analysis of 79,885 purchase transactions from a large retailer shows that using a smartphone versus a tablet or computer for online purchasing increases customers' return probability. Second, the authors conduct an online experiment and find that using a smartphone versus a tablet for purchase decisions decreases mental intangibility of the purchased product, resulting in higher subjective decision comfort but lower objective decision quality. When customers use their smartphones, they feel more at ease with their purchase decisions, even though they are less likely to make an accurate choice. Thereby, the discrepancy between pre-purchase expectation and post-purchase performance should increase, resulting in post-purchase dissatisfaction and product returns.

Keywords: *product returns; mobile devices; decision quality*

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