

Organizing Assortments in Online Shops – The Role of Customer Inspiration and Customer Confusion

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Abstract

Retailers can organize their online assortment per substitutes (within one category i.e. shirts) or per complements (across categories i.e. complete outfits). This paper examines the influence of substitutive vs. complementary organization on cognitive and affective customer confusion, customer inspiration and their impact on assortment perception. In an online experiment, we manipulate an online shop including substitutive or complementary organization (with or without display of the total set price). We find a double mediation effect: complementary organization leads to more cognitive confusion than substitutive organization and assortment perception is only influenced negatively if cognitive confusion leads to a negative evaluation of the situation (i.e. affective confusion). Complementary organization also leads to more inspiration, which mediates assortment perception positively. However, this effect is mitigated when the total price of the complementary set is displayed.

Keywords: *assortment organization; customer confusion; customer inspiration*

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