

Shopping with More Convenience but Less Social Presence: How the Service Relationship Shapes the Effect of In-Store Technologies

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Abstract

Increasing service convenience is pivotal to customer satisfaction. Providers often introduce technologies that allow customers to save time and effort. One such technology is narrowcasting, which provides real-time dissemination of information, through digital displays and AI. Authors investigate the heterogeneous effect of narrowcasting on shopping behavior when customers seek communal (vs. exchange) relationships with service providers. Authors use a multi-method approach including field experiments and surveys in a fashion store that introduced narrowcasting, as well as online studies involving both consumers and frontline employees. The results reveal that narrowcasting benefits shopping behavior when customers seek an exchange relationship, but the effects reverse if they prefer a communal relationship. Narrowcasting increases convenience but limits employees' efforts to interact with customers and respond to their needs, a situation that only facilitates exchange relationships.

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