

“Customers usually keep this item” – The effect of return information on return behavior

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Abstract:

Online product returns are prevalent. Online shops often offer lenient return policies due to their positive effect on customer satisfaction, order probability and future purchases. This leads to high product return rates which are a heavy burden for business and environment. Even though many researchers focused on strategies to reduce product returns, effective tools are still lacking. Recently, online shops have started to offer return information to customers (e.g., Amazon’s “Customers usually keep this item”) in order to reduce returns. However, research on the effect of return information has been neglected to date and its effectiveness is unclear. Based on attribution theory and the principle of social proof, we analyze how return intention is influenced by return information and its timing in the customer journey. Relying on data from an experimental study, we show that providing return information in the pre-purchase phase can reduce customers’ return intention by 10%.

Keywords: Product Returns, Return Information, Social Proof

Track: Retailing & Omni-Channel Management