

The Effect of Online Cart Composition on Cart Abandonment

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Abstract

Online shopping cart abandonment is widespread, causing major losses in potential sales revenues to e-commerce companies. We expand efforts to mitigate online shopping cart abandonment by proposing that consumers are more likely to abandon carts containing a higher proportion of hedonic products relative to utilitarian ones. This cart composition effect is driven by consumer guilt: carts containing more hedonic products are perceived as more hedonic, inducing stronger feelings of guilt regarding cart purchase, thereby increasing the likelihood of cart abandonment. Analyses of two large-scale field datasets and three controlled experiments support the cart composition effect (Studies 1A-3B) and the mediating role of consumer guilt (Studies 2, 3A). Substantively, we offer empirical support for a practical and easily implemented intervention: using e-commerce recommendation systems to reduce cart abandonment by suggesting utilitarian items (Studies 3A & 3B).

Track: Consumer Behaviour