Smart Phones, Bad Calls? The Impact of In-store Mobile Technology Use on Consumer Decision Making

Michael R. Sciandra
J. Jeffrey Inman

The University of Pittsburgh
Introduction

• Previous research acknowledges that almost 60% of all consumer purchases are completely unplanned prior to entering the store (Inman & Winer 1998).

• Given the prevalence of in-store decisions, additional research on in-store factors influencing consumers’ decisions is vital.

• Therefore, the goal of this research is to investigate the role of in-store mobile technology use (i.e., using a cell phone or smartphone while shopping) on consumers’ in-store decision making.
Data

• The data in our study comes from the 2012 POPAI Shopper Engagement Study.

• The sample consists of 2400 supermarket shoppers from four US geographic census regions.

• Prior to shopping participants completed an entry survey detailing planned purchases, expected spending, and demographics.

• After shopping, an exit interview was used to collect information on products purchased, actual spending, cellphone or smartphone use, and store attitudes.
Phone Use Categories

- Consumers in-store phone use was partitioned into four categories:

  (1) No Use (85%): Shoppers not using a phone during the shopping trip.

  (2) Related Use (7%): Shoppers comparing prices, comparing retailers, looking at retailer’s website, accessing a shopping list, scanning a QR code on a package, or calling someone for help with decision.

  (3) Unrelated Use (7%): Shoppers engaging in private conversations, sending personal texts, checking emails, surfing the web, listening to music, or playing games.

  (4) Both Use (1%): Shoppers using their phones in both a shopping related and shopping unrelated manner during the trip.
Unrelated Phone Use = More Unplanned Purchases

- **Dependent Variable:** The number of unplanned purchases made by the shopper.
- **Result:** Shoppers in the Unrelated Use condition made more unplanned purchases when compared to shoppers in No Use condition ($p < .01$).

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Unrelated Phone Use} & \text{No Phone Use} \\
\hline
4.6 & 4.8 \\
4.8 & 5.0 \\
5.0 & 5.2 \\
5.2 & 5.4 \\
5.4 & 5.6 \\
5.6 & 5.8 \\
\end{array}
\]

\textbf{# of Unplanned Purchases*}

*Holding time in store, impulsiveness, number of purchases, age, income, and household size at their means.
Unrelated Phone Use Increases Trip Length

- **Dependent Variable:** Minutes spent in the store.
- **Result:** Unrelated phone use can substantially increase the amount of time spent in-store for shoppers planning to purchase many items.
- **Support:** Unrelated Use moderates the impact of number of items on shopping times.
  - Unrelated Use enhances the positive effect of items purchased on shopping time ($p = .03$).
  - While using a phone in an unrelated manner, a 1 unit increase in number of items increases time spent in store by an additional 1.26%.)
Phone Use Leads to More Planned but Not Purchased Items

- **Dependent Variable**: The number of items the shopper planned to purchase but did not purchase.

- **Result**: Shoppers in the Related Use condition missed marginally more items than participants in the No Use condition ($p < .10$).

- **Result**: Shoppers in the Unrelated Use condition missed more items than participants in the No Use condition ($p = .02$).

*Holding time in store, impulsiveness, number of purchases, age, income, and household size at their means.
Conclusions

- The results of our analyses illustrate the impact of in-store mobile technology use on several important consumer outcomes.
- Retailers and consumers must be cognizant of the impact mobile devices can have on purchases.
- It is beneficial to encourage mobile technology use in store, particularly unrelated use, because it leads to more unplanned purchasing, time in store, and repeat shopping trips for missed items.
For more information

• **Contact**
  – Jeff Inman [jinman@pitt.edu](mailto:jinman@pitt.edu)
  – Mike Sciandra [mrs98@pitt.edu](mailto:mrs98@pitt.edu)