

Exploring the Impact of Consumer Information Search Behavior on the Choice of Communication Products in a Multi-Channel Shopping Environment Using the Technology Acceptance Model

ABSTRACT

In the era of ubiquitous technology and information accessibility, multi-channel shopping has emerged as a prevalent consumer purchasing mode. This diversified shopping landscape presents consumers with an array of shopping channels and product options, profoundly influencing their shopping behaviors and decision-making processes, particularly in the realm of information search. This study delves into the impact of consumer information search behavior on communication product choice within a multi-channel shopping environment, employing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as the theoretical framework. The findings unveil a significant correlation between consumers' acceptance of various shopping channels and their information search behavior, which in turn shapes their communication product choices. Notably, consumers' perceptions of ease of use, information richness, and transaction security associated with shopping channels influence their channel acceptance, subsequently impacting their communication product choice behavior. These insights hold valuable implications for companies in crafting more effective marketing strategies and promotional plans, while also contributing to academic discourse on consumer behavior and the application of the Technology Acceptance Model.

JEL: M0;M3

KEYWORDS: *technology acceptance model, information search*

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly advancing technological era, technological progress and the widespread use of the internet have fundamentally changed consumer shopping behavior. With the rise of a multi-channel shopping environment, consumers can now purchase products and services of interest through various channels, such as online shopping platforms, physical stores, and mobile shopping apps. This diversified shopping environment not only provides more choices but also offers consumers more information and convenience.

This study aims to delve into the impact of consumer information search behavior on the choice of communication products in a multi-channel shopping environment. Communication products, as an indispensable part of people's lives, are influenced by multiple factors during the selection process, among which information search behavior is one. Understanding how consumers search for information in a multi-channel shopping environment and how this behavior affects their choice of communication products is of significant importance for businesses in formulating effective marketing strategies and for consumer behavior research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

With the rapid development of e-commerce, consumers face a significant increase in the amount of information available when shopping online. Zhang, Zhao, and Tan (2021) pointed out that information overload in a multi-channel shopping environment can lead to increased cognitive load for consumers, thereby affecting their decision quality and shopping experience. Information overload makes it difficult for consumers to process all available information effectively, potentially resulting in decision difficulties and purchasing errors.

In a multi-channel shopping environment, consumers need to spend more time and effort searching and filtering information to make informed purchasing decisions (Fu Yan & Feng, 2020). In this context, consumers' information search behavior becomes particularly important as it directly affects their perception and choice of products (Kim & Kim, 2020).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis (1989), is a theoretical model used to explain how users accept and use new technologies. The core constructs of the TAM model include perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU).

1. **Perceived Usefulness (PU)** Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which consumers believe that using a particular technology or system will enhance their job or life efficiency. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) pointed out that perceived usefulness has a significant and direct impact on behavioral intentions. Al-Emran, Mezhyuev, and Kamaludin (2018) further confirmed the importance of perceived usefulness in mobile learning (M-learning), recognizing it as one of the critical factors influencing technology acceptance.

2. **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)** Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which consumers believe that using a particular technology or system is simple and effortless. Davis (1989) found that perceived ease of use not only directly affects technology acceptance intentions but also indirectly influences them through perceived usefulness. Tarhini, Hone, and Liu (2017) supported this view, considering perceived ease of use an important factor affecting consumer technology acceptance.

Information search behavior refers to various activities undertaken by consumers during the purchasing decision process to obtain relevant information. Peterson and Merino (2003) identified that information search behavior includes aspects such as search frequency, search depth, and search breadth (diversity).

1. **Search Frequency** Search frequency refers to the number of times consumers search for information during the purchasing process. Beatty and Smith (1987) indicated that the higher the search frequency, the more information consumers obtain, enabling them to make more informed purchasing decisions. Kim and Kim (2020) found in their research that search frequency significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions.
2. **Search Depth** Search depth refers to the extent to which consumers deeply understand product information during the information search process. Moore and Lehmann (1980) found that the higher the search depth, the more comprehensive consumers' understanding of the product, leading to higher quality purchasing decisions. Jiang and Benbasat (2007) also indicated that search depth positively influences consumer purchasing decisions.
3. **Search Breadth (Diversity)** Search breadth refers to the diversity of information sources and channels involved in consumers' information search process. Urbany et al. (1989) showed that the greater the search breadth, the more diverse information consumers can obtain, helping them make more balanced purchasing decisions. Gupta and Dharmi (2015) pointed out that search breadth is particularly significant in social media applications, as consumers can obtain information through multiple channels.

PRODUCT CHOICE

Product choice refers to the process by which consumers make purchasing decisions among numerous products. Kotler and Keller (2012) identified that the main factors influencing consumer product choice include brand, price, functionality, and ease of use.

1. **Brand** Brand is one of the important factors in consumer choice of communication products. Aaker (1991) noted that a strong brand can enhance consumer trust and loyalty to the product, thereby influencing their purchasing decisions. Lee and Hong

(2016) also supported this view, considering that brand significantly influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

2. **Price** Price is another critical factor influencing consumer choice of communication products. Monroe (1990) found that consumers usually balance between price and product quality when making purchasing decisions. Kim and Lee (2019) discovered that price perception significantly influences consumers' purchasing intentions.
3. **Functionality** Functionality refers to the various characteristics and performance of a product. Rogers (2003) believed that product functionality innovation and technological advancement are key factors attracting consumers. Dwivedi et al. (2019) also indicated that functionality innovation significantly influences consumers' technology acceptance intentions.
4. **Ease of Use** Ease of use refers to the convenience of using the product. Davis (1989) pointed out that the higher the ease of use, the higher the consumer acceptance of the product, thereby influencing their purchasing decisions. Chen et al. (2019) found that ease of use significantly influences consumers' purchasing decisions in a multi-channel shopping environment.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the above literature review, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1a: Perceived usefulness (PU) positively affects the frequency of information search.
- H1b: Perceived usefulness (PU) positively affects the depth of information search.
- H1c: Perceived usefulness (PU) positively affects the breadth (diversity) of information search.
- H2a: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively affects the frequency of information search.
- H2b: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively affects the depth of information search.
- H2c: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively affects the breadth (diversity) of information search.
- H3a: The frequency of information search positively affects the choice of communication products.
- H3b: The depth of information search positively affects the choice of communication products.
- H3c: The breadth (diversity) of information search positively affects the choice of communication products.
- H4: Perceived usefulness (PU) positively affects the choice of communication products.
- H5: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively affects the choice of communication products.

- H6: Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively affects perceived usefulness (PU).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research method using questionnaire surveys to collect data, supplemented by statistical analysis techniques to explore the impact of perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) on consumers' information search behavior (search frequency, search depth, search breadth) and their choice of communication products in a multi-channel shopping environment. The research framework, as previously mentioned, is based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and constructs a relationship model of independent and dependent variables.

Sample Selection and Data Collection

The questionnaire survey was conducted both online and offline to increase sample diversity and representativeness. Online questionnaires were distributed through social media and email channels, while offline questionnaires were distributed at communication stores, 3C malls, and other high-consumption locations. Each questionnaire was screened for completeness to ensure data validity upon collection.

Section 3: Variable Operational Definition

- **Independent Variables:**

Perceived Usefulness (PU): The extent to which consumers believe that using a particular technology or system can enhance their job or life efficiency.

- **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU):** The extent to which consumers believe that using a particular technology or system is simple and effortless.
- **Dependent Variables:**
 - **Choice of Communication Products:** The process by which consumers make purchasing decisions among various communication products.

Data Analysis Methods

This study will use SPSS for multiple regression analysis, which mainly includes the following steps:

1. **Descriptive Statistical Analysis:** To understand the basic characteristics of the sample, such as gender, age, and education level.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** To examine the relationships between variables and lay the foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing.
3. **Confirmatory Factor Analysis:** To assess the reliability and validity of the scales and ensure the validity of variable measurements.

Model Construction and Validation

Based on the TAM theory, this study constructs a theoretical model that includes perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), information search behavior (search frequency, search depth, search breadth), and choice of communication products. The hypothesis relationships among variables will be tested through path analysis in structural equation modeling, ultimately leading to research conclusions.

Overall, this study employs quantitative research methods combined with questionnaire surveys and statistical analysis techniques to comprehensively and deeply reveal consumer information search behavior in a multi-channel shopping environment and its impact on the choice of communication products, providing valuable insights for related theoretical research and business practices.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

In terms of "usefulness," the average scores for each measurement item range from 3.88 to 3.98. The highest score was for "Using multiple shopping channels can improve my shopping efficiency," while the lowest was for "Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels is beneficial." The detailed data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of "Usefulness"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. Using multiple shopping channels can improve my shopping efficiency.	3.98	0.65	1
2. Using multiple shopping channels can enhance my shopping experience.	3.92	0.61	2

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
3. Using multiple shopping channels can help me make better purchasing decisions.	3.91	0.69	3
4. Using multiple shopping channels can meet my shopping needs.	3.90	0.73	4
5. Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels is beneficial.	3.88	0.70	5

In terms of "ease of use," the average scores for each measurement item range from 3.52 to 4.16. The highest scores were for "Browsing and comparing multiple shopping channels is easy" and "Finding the desired information on multiple shopping channels is easy," while the lowest was for "Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels when shopping is easy." The detailed data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of "Ease of Use"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. Using multiple shopping channels is easy to get started with.	4.06	0.67	3
2. Using multiple shopping channels does not require much effort and time.	4.09	0.66	2
3. Browsing and comparing multiple shopping channels is easy.	4.16	0.67	1
4. Finding the desired information on multiple shopping channels is easy.	4.16	0.68	1
5. Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels when shopping is easy.	3.52	0.73	4

In terms of "information search frequency," the average scores for each measurement item range from 4.13 to 4.19. The highest score was for "I usually search multiple times for relevant information when purchasing communication products," while the lowest was for "I repeatedly search for communication product information until I am satisfied." The detailed data are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of "Information Search Frequency"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. I usually search multiple times for relevant information when purchasing communication products.	4.19	0.59	1
2. I repeatedly search for communication product information until I am satisfied.	4.13	0.62	3
3. I spend a long time searching for relevant information on communication products.	4.15	0.60	2

In terms of "information search depth," the average scores for each measurement item range from 3.76 to 3.91. The highest score was for "I will review various product information such as reviews, specifications, and user experiences," while the lowest was for "I will spend a lot of time understanding the various features and characteristics of communication products." The detailed data are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of "Information Search Depth"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. When searching for communication product information, I will carefully read and understand the detailed specifications.	3.88	0.69	2
2. I will review various product information such as reviews, specifications, and user experiences.	3.91	0.69	1
3. I will spend a lot of time understanding the various features and characteristics of communication products.	3.76	0.73	4
4. I will conduct in-depth analysis and comparison of communication product information.	3.80	0.69	3

In terms of "information search breadth," the average scores for each measurement item range from 3.67 to 3.81. The highest score was for "I will collect communication product information from various perspectives," while the lowest was for "I will search for communication product information across multiple channels (e.g., online, physical stores, social media)." The detailed data are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of "Information Search Breadth"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. I will search for communication product information across multiple channels (e.g., online, physical stores, social media).	3.67	0.74	3
2. I will review different types of information sources (e.g., brand official websites, third-party review sites).	3.78	0.73	2
3. I will collect communication product information from various perspectives.	3.81	0.66	1

In terms of "communication product choice," the average scores for each measurement item range from 3.70 to 3.95. The highest score was for "The functionality of communication products is an important factor in my choice," while the lowest was for "I will choose based on the price of communication products." The detailed data are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of "Communication Product Choice"

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. I prefer certain brands of communication products.	3.79	0.65	2
2. I will choose based on the price of communication products.	3.70	0.68	4
3. The functionality of communication products is an important factor in my choice.	3.95	0.62	1
4. Ease of use is one of the factors I consider when choosing communication products.	3.75	0.76	3

Section 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

According to the analysis results shown in Table 7, the correlation coefficients between pairs of variables reach a statistically significant level, with coefficients greater than 0.7 indicating high correlation; coefficients between 0.69 and 0.50 indicating moderate to high correlation; coefficients between 0.49 and 0.30 indicating moderate correlation; and coefficients below 0.29 indicating low correlation.

For example, the correlation coefficient between "perceived usefulness" and "information search frequency" is .441 ($P=0.000$), indicating a positive correlation between "perceived usefulness" and "information search frequency." Similarly, the correlation coefficient between "perceived usefulness" and "information search depth" is .419 ($P=0.000$), indicating a positive correlation between "perceived usefulness" and "information search depth." The correlation

coefficient between "perceived usefulness" and "information search breadth" is .366 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation between "perceived usefulness" and "information search breadth."

For "perceived ease of use" and "information search frequency," the correlation coefficient is .558 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between "perceived ease of use" and "information search depth" is .395 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between "perceived ease of use" and "information search breadth" is .444 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation

The correlation coefficient between "information search frequency" and "choice of communication products" is .523 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between "information search depth" and "choice of communication products" is .387 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between "information search breadth" and "choice of communication products" is .409 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation.

The correlation coefficient between "perceived usefulness" and "choice of communication products" is .354 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between "perceived ease of use" and "choice of communication products" is .484 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between "perceived ease of use" and "perceived usefulness" is .519 (P=0.000), indicating a positive correlation.

Table 7: Correlation Coefficient Table

Research Variables	Usefulness	Ease of Use	Search Frequency	Search Depth	Search Breadth	Product Choice
Usefulness	1					
Ease of Use	.519***	1				
Search Frequency	.441***	.558***	1			
Search Depth	.419***	.395***	.467***	1		
Search Breadth	.366***	.444***	.403***	.420***	1	
Product Choice	.354***	.484***	.523***	.387***	.409***	1

*Note: *P < .05; **P < .01; ***P < .001

Results Analysis

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis results, this study conducted an in-depth exploration of various variables, analyzing the impact of multiple shopping channels on user behavior. The specific results are as follows:

1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

- **Usefulness:** The average scores for usefulness range from 3.88 to 3.98. The item "Using multiple shopping channels can improve my shopping efficiency" received the highest average score (3.98), indicating that users believe multiple shopping channels can effectively enhance shopping efficiency. The item "Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels is beneficial" received the lowest average score (3.88), but it still shows that users generally recognize the value of multiple shopping channels.
- **Ease of Use:** The average scores for ease of use range from 3.52 to 4.16. The items "Browsing and comparing multiple shopping channels is easy" and "Finding the desired information on multiple shopping channels is easy" received the highest average scores (4.16), indicating that users find multiple shopping channels easy to use and to search for information. The item "Overall, choosing multiple shopping channels when shopping is easy" received the lowest average score (3.52), indicating that users face certain challenges in selecting multiple shopping channels.
- **Information Search Frequency:** The average scores for information search frequency range from 4.13 to 4.19. The item "I usually search multiple times for relevant information when purchasing communication products" received the highest average score (4.19), indicating that users conduct multiple information searches when purchasing communication products. The item "I repeatedly search for communication product information until I am satisfied" received the lowest average score (4.13), but it still shows frequent information search behavior among users.
- **Information Search Depth:** The average scores for information search depth range from 3.76 to 3.91. The item "I will review various product information such as reviews, specifications, and user experiences" received the highest average score (3.91), indicating that users thoroughly understand product information. The item "I will spend a lot of time understanding the various features and characteristics of communication products" received the lowest average score (3.76), but it still shows users' in-depth information search behavior.

- **Information Search Breadth:** The average scores for information search breadth range from 3.67 to 3.81. The item "I will collect communication product information from various perspectives" received the highest average score (3.81), indicating that users gather product information from multiple angles. The item "I will search for communication product information across multiple channels (e.g., online, physical stores, social media)" received the lowest average score (3.67), indicating the breadth of users' information search across multiple channels.
- **Communication Product Choice:** The average scores for communication product choice range from 3.70 to 3.95. The item "The functionality of communication products is an important factor in my choice" received the highest average score (3.95), indicating that functionality is a key consideration for users when choosing products. The item "I will choose based on the price of communication products" received the lowest average score (3.70), but it still highlights the importance of price in users' choices.

2. Pearson Correlation Analysis

- **High Correlation ($r > 0.7$):** No variable pairs reached this correlation level.
- **Moderate to High Correlation ($0.69 \geq r \geq 0.50$):**
 - Perceived ease of use and information search frequency ($r = 0.558$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Information search frequency and choice of communication products ($r = 0.523$, $P = 0.000$)
- **Moderate Correlation ($0.49 \geq r \geq 0.30$):**
 - Perceived usefulness and information search frequency ($r = 0.441$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Perceived usefulness and information search depth ($r = 0.419$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Perceived usefulness and information search breadth ($r = 0.366$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Perceived ease of use and information search depth ($r = 0.395$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Perceived ease of use and information search breadth ($r = 0.444$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Information search depth and choice of communication products ($r = 0.387$, $P = 0.000$)
 - Information search breadth and choice of communication products ($r = 0.409$, $P = 0.000$)

- Perceived usefulness and choice of communication products ($r = 0.354$, $P = 0.000$)
- Perceived ease of use and choice of communication products ($r = 0.484$, $P = 0.000$)
- Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness ($r = 0.519$, $P = 0.000$)
- **Low Correlation ($r < 0.29$):** No variable pairs reached this correlation level.

These results show that there are positive correlations of varying degrees among the variables, especially the significant correlations between "perceived ease of use" and "information search frequency," and between "information search frequency" and "choice of communication products." These findings suggest that the use of multiple shopping channels positively impacts users' shopping efficiency, shopping experience, and the frequency and depth of their information searches.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, multiple shopping channels have a significant positive impact on consumers' perceived usefulness, ease of use, and information search behavior. The specific conclusions are as follows:

- **Improvement in Shopping Efficiency and Experience:** Multiple shopping channels significantly enhance shopping efficiency and experience, with users generally believing these channels to be beneficial.
- **High Ease of Use:** Consumers find multiple shopping channels easy to use and time-saving, especially in browsing and comparing product information.
- **Promotion of In-depth Information Search:** Consumers conduct multiple and in-depth information searches when purchasing communication products, indicating the need for extensive information before making purchasing decisions.
- **Variable Correlations:** There are significant positive correlations among variables, particularly between "perceived ease of use" and "information search frequency," and between "information search frequency" and "choice of communication products."

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the research results, the following recommendations are made for businesses and future research:

- **Enhancing the Perceived Usefulness of Shopping Channels:**
 - Businesses should strengthen the functionality of multi-channel shopping platforms, providing richer and more accurate product information. This

includes detailed product descriptions, specifications, user reviews, and comparison tools to help consumers obtain more useful information during information searches, thereby improving their shopping efficiency and experience.

- Optimize the user experience of shopping platforms to enhance consumer trust and reliance on the platform. This can be achieved by offering reliable after-sales service, simple return and exchange processes, and transparent pricing policies.
- **Improving the Perceived Ease of Use of Shopping Channels:**
 - Businesses should focus on the ease of use design of multi-channel shopping platforms, simplifying operational processes to make it easy for consumers to find the information they need. This includes optimizing website navigation, providing intelligent search functions, and simplifying the checkout process.
 - Offer diverse information sources and interactive features, such as online customer service, instant chat, and virtual try-ons, to help consumers quickly resolve issues and obtain product information.
- **Promoting Frequent and In-depth Information Searches:**

Businesses can attract consumers to frequently search and deeply understand products by providing high-quality content and diverse information. This can be achieved through blog posts, product review videos, and expert recommendations.

- Collaborate with third-party review platforms to provide authoritative product reviews and comparison information, helping consumers make more informed decisions during the decision-making process.
- **Consumer Education and Promotion:**
 - Strengthen consumer education on the recognition and use skills of multi-channel shopping, through publicity and training to let consumers understand how to efficiently use multi-channel shopping platforms for information search and product selection.
 - Actively promote the advantages and ease of use of their multi-channel shopping platforms to consumers, through promotional activities and discount measures to attract more consumers to use their platforms.
- **Future Research Directions:**
 - **Deepen Research on Consumer Behavior in Multi-Channel Shopping Environments:** Future research can further explore the impact of different types of multi-channel shopping environments (e.g., online-offline integrated shopping, social media shopping) on consumer information search behavior and product choice, to provide more specific guidance.

- **Expand Research Scope:** Expand the research scope to other product categories and market regions, examining the behavioral differences of consumers in multi-channel shopping environments for different products and regions, providing a basis for companies to formulate more targeted market strategies.
- **Application of Emerging Technologies:** Explore the application of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data in multi-channel shopping environments, analyzing their impact on consumer information search behavior and product choice, and providing new ideas for business innovation and optimization.

In summary, companies should focus on enhancing the perceived usefulness and ease of use of shopping channels, promoting frequent and in-depth information searches among consumers, and improving consumers' ability to use multi-channel shopping platforms through effective publicity and education activities. Future research should continue to deepen and expand, providing richer theoretical and practical support for businesses and academia.

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