Differences in usage of mobile applications in a global retail market: A case study of Western and Eastern cultures

Josie Willman | Professor Vasu Unnava

Introduction and Research Context

Purpose: Understand how consumers in Eastern and Western cultures utilize retail mobile apps and differences in the motivations that influence their respective sharing behaviors.

What consumers expect in retail today:
- A conversation and an element of storytelling in the retail environment
- Want opportunity to provide feedback and know they are being heard
- Bring online shopping experience into stores
- Want their experience through any channel to be customizable

Mobile has become an imperative channel to target

Why should retailers focus on mobile apps?
- Integrating the in-store experience with mobile apps could drive up to 5x as much engagement
- Use of retail mobile apps is a global phenomenon

Methodology

Form: Survey
- Scales used measured on a 7-point Likert scale include:
  - TAM3 Model – perceived usefulness, ease of use, and security
  - Sharing motives (image associated with sharing, personal emotions caused by sharing, and expectations of sharing) and sharing behaviors

Distribution: Fisher Behavioral Lab
Total Responses: 284 Students
- 176 Western Students,
- 108 Eastern Students

Demographics:
- Age
  - 97% of respondents in the age range 18-24 (college demographics)
- Gender
  - 52% Female
  - 48% Male

Hypotheses & Data Analysis

Theory Background

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
- A theoretical framework developed to predict individual adoption and use of new technologies
- Recently used to predict adoption in the mobile device domain in different industries (e.g. retail)

Technology Acceptance Model 3 (TAM3)

How does it differ from the original TAM?
- Adds in additional constructs of social factors
- Our research: sharing behavior and sharing motivations

How is it used in our research?
- Understand how personality traits in Eastern and Western cultures influence their perceptions of retail mobile apps
- Identify how different cultures’ traits influence the social and sharing aspect of mobile apps

Data Analysis Continued

Conclusions

- There are differences in adoption of technology due to perceived usefulness and perceived security of use. Thus, TAM3 model is supported.
- For this group of people (millenials), perceived ease of use is a non-factor.
- Eastern and Western cultures differ on their usage of mobile apps.
- Eastern and Western cultures differ on their sharing motivations – Eastern consumers are more inclined to share mobile apps with their friends.
- When sharing motivations are used as covariates, the difference between cultures on usage of mobile apps disappears. This suggests that sharing is linked with usage of mobile apps.

Recommendations

- When designing apps, more focus should be on their usefulness for the target market than how easy it is to use the app.
- Since sharing is linked with usage, promoting sharing behaviors will increase app usage.
- Sharing behaviors appear to be linked with three types of motivations – image, personal benefits, and perceived expectations from others. Sharing behaviors, therefore, can be enhanced by affecting each of the three motivations.
- Image – advertisements showing sharing behavior as cool
- Personal emotions – Ads that show positive personal emotions
- Perceived expectations – Show expectations as factors among friends

Promotion of Apps by Culture:
- Eastern – Focus retail app message on a combination of the image it gives consumers, how the app may make them feel, and that there is an expectation of them to share the app with others.
- Western – Focus retail app message on the particular image (e.g. cool, innovative, etc.) using the particular retail app may transp on to the consumer’s own image among their groups.

Future Research

- If cultural expectations are responsible for diminished sharing behaviors among Western consumers, would external inducements of rewards promote greater sharing?
- Would an app for sharing make it easier for sharing and promote sharing?

Sources: