

Trying to resist the urge to splurge? Ditch the smartphone

August 16 2017



UBC Okanagan Faculty of Management assistant professor Ying Zhu. Credit: UBC Okanagan

You are more likely to indulge in guilty pleasures when shopping online with a touchscreen versus a desktop computer, according to research

from UBC's Okanagan campus.

Studies conducted by Faculty of Management assistant professor Ying Zhu are shedding new light into [consumer behaviour](#) when it comes to touchscreen technology, a rapidly increasing sales technology.

"Touchscreen technology has rapidly penetrated the consumer market and embedded itself into our daily lives. Given its fast growth and popularity, we know surprisingly little about its effect on consumers," explains Zhu. "With more than two billion smartphone users, the use of tactile technologies for online shopping alone is set to represent nearly half of all e-commerce by next year."

To extend our knowledge on the touchscreen, Zhu and her co-author, Jeffrey Meyer, conducted a series of experiments with university students to measure thinking styles and purchase intentions using devices like touchscreens and [desktop](#) computers.

The study aimed to investigate whether online purchase intentions change when it comes to two different types of products: hedonic, or those that give the consumer pleasure like chocolate or massages; and utilitarian, products that are practical, like bread or printers.

"The playful and fun nature of the touchscreen enhances consumers' favour of hedonic products; while the logical and functional nature of a desktop endorses the consumers' preference for utilitarian products," explains Zhu.

Zhu's study also found that participants using touchscreen technology scored significantly higher on experiential thinking than those using desktop computers. However, those on desktops scored significantly higher on rational thinking.

"Overall, what we learned is that using a [touchscreen](#) evokes consumers' experiential thinking, which resonates with the playful nature of hedonic products. These results may well be a game-changer for sectors like the retail industry," says Zhu. "But my advice for consumers who want to save a bit of money is to put away the smartphone when you have urge to spend on a guilty pleasure."

The study was published in the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Trying to resist the urge to splurge? Ditch the smartphone (2017, August 16) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-08-resist-urge-splurge-ditch-smartphone.html>

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