

Using a mobile while browsing the shelves may make shoppers buy more

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In-store mobile phone use that is unrelated to shopping may be associated with an increase in unplanned purchases, according to a study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.

Dr. Michael Sciandra at Fairfield University, US and colleagues investigated the impact of [mobile phone](#) use on in-store [shopping](#)

behaviour. They found that those who used mobile phones in store for purposes unrelated to shopping, such as making [phone](#) calls, sending text messages, checking emails or listening to music, were more likely to make unplanned purchases and forget items they had planned to buy. The authors observed this effect even when phones were only used for part of the shopping trip, suggesting that in-store mobile phone use may consume attentional resources even after the phone is put away.

Dr. Michael Sciandra, corresponding author of the study said: "Our finding that phone use that is unrelated to shopping negatively affects shopping behaviour was in stark contrast to beliefs held by consumers. The vast majority of shoppers we asked thought that mobile phones did not have any [negative effect](#)."

The researchers asked 231 participants to complete a simulated shopping task. While the participants either refrained from using their phone, or used it for an unrelated task either constantly (simulated [phone call](#)) or intermittently, they were shown a first person perspective video of someone grocery shopping. The participants were given a shopping list of items and were asked to compare the list to the products the person in the video placed in the cart, or picked up and put down. The participants' mobile phone dependence was assessed via self-report.

The authors found that consumers who are highly dependent upon mobile phones, characterized by excessive use of and reliance on the device, were the most at risk of deviating from a shopping plan while engaging in shopping-unrelated mobile phone use.

Dr. Sciandra said: "Mobile phones are quickly becoming the principal distractor for many consumers and they offer a unique form of interruption. Our findings may influence consumers' attitudes towards [mobile phone use](#) while shopping and persuade them to reflect on how these devices impact our lives, both positively and negatively."

The authors note that part of the study is based on a simulated shopping experience only, therefore caution should be taken when applying these conclusions from this to real life settings.

More information: Smart phones, bad calls? The influence of consumer mobile phone use, distraction, and phone dependence on adherence to shopping plans, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00647-9

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